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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes the literature on the causes of dropping out, reviews national dropout prevention initiatives, proposes a set of principles to guide dropout prevention programs, and recommends a framework of policies for the Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) Public Schools. The dropout literature indicates that dropping out is a developmental process involving a complicated interaction of student and school factors. The following effective programs were identified: (1) the Youth Entitlement Project (YIEPP); (2) the Summer Employment and Training Program (STEP); and (3) Job Corps. The following programs also appeared to be effective: (1) the Job Readiness Program; (2) the Philadelphia High School Academies; (3) the Focus Project; (4) Project COFFEE; (5) the Family Learning Center; and (6) Cities in Schools. The following principles were compiled from an analysis of program features: (1) deliver education in small, intensive units; (2) develop high teacher expectations, reinforce student self-worth, and hold students to clear standards; (3) use a wide range of instructional techniques; (4) meet the broad range of disadvantaged students' needs; (5) incorporate sustained adult contact; (6) establish school-community partnerships; (7) build in economic incentives; (8) remove barriers to attendance; (9) change ineffective policies; and (10) identify at-risk students early in their careers. A review of existing programs in the Philadelphia schools indicates a strong base for implementing a system-wide approach but the present scope is inadequate. A set of operational and management recommendations is suggested that forms a framework for reform at the school and unit level. A 194-item bibliography and brief descriptions of five programs identified in the text are appended. (FMW)

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RECLAIMING THE FUTURE

A Framework for Improving Student Success and Reducing Dropout Rates in Philadelphia

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RECLAIMING THE FUTURE:

A Framework for Improving Student Success and Reducing Dropout Rates in Philadelphia

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1988

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Bernard J. McMullan
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nationwide, educators, employers and parents are greatly concerned about the failure of substantial numbers of students do not graduate from high school. Although numerous approaches to reducing the dropout rate have been tried, data indicate that the rate of students leaving school without graduating has not substantially changed in 25 years. In Philadelphia, approximately one in three students who enter 9th grade leave school before graduating. Students who drop out face consequences of increasing severity. The federal government estimates most jobs created in the rest of this century will require some postsecondary training, for which, coincidentally, dropouts will not qualify.

Today's youth enter a labor market in which a high school diploma is often the minimum they need to be considered for a job and a society in which a high school education only begins to prepare them to be a full and successful participant in what that society has to offer. Nationally, however, one-quarter of all students leave school without even this basic minimum of education. Youth in urban areas--where the consequences of poverty are felt, where teachers and schools have often been overwhelmed by the expanding social and economic needs of children matched by proportionately fewer resources--are especially prone to leave school without a diploma.

This report summarizes relevant research and policy literature about the causes of dropping out and national initiatives designed to reduce dropout rates or ameliorate the consequences of leaving school early. Second, the report offers a set of principles to guide efforts to reduce the chances of dropping out. The report concludes with a series of policy recommendations based on these principles that constitute a framework for reducing the number of students who leave Philadelphia Public Schools before graduating.

STUDY SCOPE

The Office of Planning of the School District of Philadelphia, which commissioned this report, gave three directives to guide its preparation. First, it asked that the focus be on improving student performance as well as dropping out. Within this context, we were asked to emphasize broad systemwide change over implementation of many modest dropout prevention initiatives serving limited numbers of individuals. Second, we were asked to limit our investigation to grades 5 through 12 since major initiatives in preschool and kindergarten through fourth grade had already begun. Last, to the extent possible, we were

asked to provide insights that could inform the planned restructuring of comprehensive high schools.

CAUSES OF DROPPING OUT

Although there is a fairly large body of research on why students drop out, much of it is inconclusive. By this we mean that a straightforward reading of this literature does not provide obvious answers about factors easily susceptible to policy manipulation or optimal intervention points. There are three central weaknesses in much of the available research:

- Researchers often do not distinguish underlying causal factors from those merely associated with dropping out.
- Much of the literature that describes who drops out of high school treats dropping out as an event and not as a process. It tends to focus on symptoms or manifestations of dropping out and not its underlying causes.
- There are very little data that consider the interaction between school factors that might contribute to dropping out and characteristics of the students who leave.

Despite these limitations the research does offer some insights. Understanding why students drop out has a number of implications for designing dropout prevention strategies. First, it strongly indicates that dropping out is a process and not an event--a developmental process involving a complicated interaction among students' family backgrounds, early ability, their achievement in school, the school's ability to enhance or interfere with that achievement and personal stresses within and outside of the schools.

Thus, to be successful, dropout prevention efforts need to consider the interrelationships that drive dropping out behavior:

- they ought to compensate for some of the manifestations of poverty;
- they should consider changing school factors as seriously as they do student behaviors in response to those factors;
- they ought to focus on root causes rather than precipitating events, and
- because learning and failure are cumulative, the earlier one intervenes once a problem is recognized,

the more efficiently and effectively one is likely to address it.

It is also clear from the causal literature that there is no single best time to intervene but that responses must be conditioned by the needs of students:

- Intervention must begin during primary and elementary grades because patterns of success and failure tend to be cumulative.

- Beyond early intervention, schools must be prepared with a variety of age-appropriate interventions to deal with students who exhibit pre-dropout behavior in later school years.

- Besides attention to deficits, successful approaches at every level must build on student strengths, affirm that each student can succeed, and demand excellence of students, teachers and schools.

- Grades 6 through 9 are particularly difficult because they serve students confronting the stresses of new educational demands compounded with significant personal and social pressures associated with adolescence such as emerging sexuality, peer pressure and expanded opportunities for substance abuse.

SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS

Scores of dropout prevention programs have been designed to stem the tide of students leaving school before graduating. In spite of the range and multitude of approaches, few can offer compelling evidence that they substantially reduce the chances of dropping out. In part, the lack of evidence results from a lack of solid research on the effects of these programs; however, the limited promising evidence also reflects the intractability of the dropout problem that proves resistant to many approaches.

In a review of dozens of programs, we identified few for which reliable evaluation results on their effectiveness were available. These included three demonstration efforts--Youth Entitlement Project (YIEPP); Summer Employment and Training Program (STEP); and Job Corps--each of which can be placed in the employment and training tradition.

In addition to these three programs, we identified a small number of programs which, based on some preliminary evidence, are likely to improve the chances for graduation: Job Readiness Program; the Philadelphia Academies; Focus; Project Coffee; the Family Learning Center and Cities in Schools as it implemented

in Philadelphia. Although the research on effectiveness of these programs is not as rigorous as the programs described above, we believe that they offer a strong potential for overcoming the dropout problem.

Finally, we examined a broad range of other programs and initiatives for whom evidence on effectiveness was either nonexistent or inconclusive but which provided useful insights on approaches to serving dropout prone youth.

In our analyses of these programs and their data on effectiveness, we were struck by the level of consistency in the key program features across the models, especially among those which appeared to be effective. Using these common features and what we had learned about the causes of dropping out we developed a series of principles to focus a discussion of designing a dropout prevention initiative for Philadelphia. These principles are presented below:

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE DROPOUT PREVENTION

1. Deliver education in small, intensive units with low ratios of teachers to students and many opportunities for personal contact.

2. Develop high teacher expectations, reinforce student self-worth, set clear standards and hold students to them.

3. Use of a wide range of instructional techniques, including individualized approaches. Use state-of-the-art instructional methods (i.e., cooperative learning, computer-assisted instruction, mastery learning approaches) to upgrade the general quality of instruction and reach individual students.

4. Meet the broad range of needs of youth with multiple disadvantages or risk factors. Integrate remediation with components to meet health and social service needs. Develop holistic, comprehensive programs combining social and academic activities.

5. Incorporate sustained adult contact into programs. The first option is to have this sustained contact be with teachers. Other options are to use counselors, community workers, parents and business people.

6. Establish purposive partnerships with the outside community (parents, community organizations, private sector, colleges and universities and social service deliverers) as a way to expand resources available to the school, to build a broader constituency for public education, to

empower parents and the community and to create access to opportunities (jobs, postsecondary schooling) beyond the schools.

7. Build in incentives, such as jobs, to attend and perform well in school.

8. Remove barriers to attending school: provide as necessary child care, income-producing opportunities (work-study and part-time jobs), flexible hours, transportation, etc.

9. Change policies having unintended or perverse effects: methods of accounting for student enrollment, suspension, grade retention, withdrawal, teacher assignment, etc.

10. Identify at-risk youth early--both early in their school careers and as early as they manifest signs of poor performance.

PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS RESPONSE TO DROPOUT ISSUE

The Philadelphia Public Schools offer a wide range of examples of programs and initiatives that embody many of the principles identified above as central to effective dropout prevention. We identified three types of programs that can serve as illustrations for designing a systemic response of dropout prevention. The first type of program includes those designed to serve actual or potential dropouts. We reviewed four programs in this category: The Philadelphia High School Academy; Cities-In-Schools; Douglas-Carroll Alternative Program and Jones/Stetson Alternative Middle School. The second category of Philadelphia Public School programs studied were programs aimed at special at-risk populations. These included: Alternative Placement Center; Shallcross; and Comprehensive Services for Pregnant and Parenting Students (CSPPS). The final category included three distinctive alternative programs: Parkway, Franklin Learning Center and the Motivation Program.

Our review of these 10 programs strongly suggest that Philadelphia Public Schools have a strong base of experience in designing and implementing programs that incorporate the principles we identify as important in effective dropout prevention. At the same time, however, our review also suggests that the scope of existing programs is inadequate to address the substantial challenge posed by dropout rates among Philadelphia Public school students.

THE NEED FOR A SYSTEMWIDE RESPONSE

The recommendations below are offered in the belief that will be most effective if they are implemented systemwide throughout Philadelphia Public Schools. By systemwide, we mean making the

recommendation part of normal district policy which would represent a profound reformation of the way public education is delivered in Philadelphia. We believe that our focus on systemwide solutions is both necessary and compelling.

First, the magnitude of the problem of poor academic achievement and high levels of dropping out demands a systemic solution. In large urban school districts, where dropout rates hover above 30 percent, dropout prevention strategies should not be small and targeted, but need to be implemented broadly. Any small dropout prevention program would be totally overwhelmed by the vast numbers of youth who are "at risk". A strategy whose primary response was to implement a series of small individual programs would be ill-advised for it would not reach the large majority of students in need of assistance.

The second compelling reason for adopting a systemwide approach is that the problems of inadequate academic performance are not isolated in a particular part of the system. The problems exist at all grade levels and across all districts.

Third, even if a response was developed to serve the students identified as at-risk by virtue of having just failed a grade, an equally large or possibly larger number of students remain marginally at-risk within the schools. They perform just well enough to pass from year to year but often lack the basic skills to succeed either at the next educational level or in employment once graduated. The gravity of their position is often overshadowed by the magnitude of the problems of students who are failing already.

Fourth, even students whom data would indicate are "successful" often remain at-risk. Fifteen percent of all graduates of the class of 1985 were not fully engaged (either in full-time employment or postsecondary education) several months after graduation; the comparable number for graduates of comprehensive high schools was 30 to 35 percent (Education for Employment Task Force, 1986). According to school district data, the proportion of students who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) (expressed as the percent tested over the total number of 1986 graduates) was only 39 percent. However, even among this limited number of students who thought about entering college after graduation, the average combined SAT score was 771 in 1986 compared with a national average of 906. We conclude that systemwide change is needed that reaches beyond addressing the needs of students who are most 'at-risk' to increasing the academic achievements of all in the district.

Finally, high family mobility is a common characteristic of students enrolled in urban schools. This high intra-district and inter-district student mobility makes it necessary that any academic improvement/dropout prevention initiative be system-

wide in order to reach these students as they enter the school district at different times and places.

THE NEED FOR A COMMUNITYWIDE RESPONSE

Although we believe that the scope of the problems facing Philadelphia schools and students requires a systemwide approach, we are also firmly convinced that an approach solely limited to the resources of the school district will not be adequate to address the task. Undergirding many of our recommendations is the assumption that substantial support from the broader Philadelphia community is necessary. Thus, in addition to a school district systemwide approach, we call for citywide support and involvement in these efforts.

According to some observers, schools in recent years have been asked to meet an ever-broadening array of students' personal and social problems (e.g., poor nutrition, poor health, substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy and lack of shelter). Other observers note that schools have traditionally met many of these needs but never for such a high percentage of youth. What is agreed on by all, however, is that these kinds of problems must be addressed in order for youth to learn.

Schools cannot be expected to meet the full range of student needs alone. Effective solutions will only emerge when the resources of parents, the private sector, universities, churches, city and state agencies and other organizations are tapped.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: SPECIFIC SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

We propose a set of operational and management recommendations embodying these principles. In addition, we suggest specific ways in which these recommendations can be implemented in the schools.

We propose nine specific recommendations which together constitute a framework for action to address the educational needs of Philadelphia school children. We have specifically avoided advancing "The Plan," believing that individual schools and units can better accomplish education using a design that is tailored to their particular circumstances. Rather, what we propose is a schematic for engendering school reform at the school and unit level.

The recommendations below are not intended to eliminate a priori existing magnet schools, limited admissions schools or other programs (though we anticipate that some programs will become indistinguishable from regular school practice if the recommendations are followed). Indeed, many of the recommendations made below are being realized in them and give the

district good examples of how these recommendations can be achieved. To eliminate them would be foolhardy. However, to exempt these schools and programs from reassessing themselves in light of our recommendations would be equally wrong. Even among the best and most sophisticated, there is substantial room for improvement.

The focus of our recommendations are firmly grounded in prevention approaches and rely less on interventions after a problem has appeared. We realize that these recommendations have differential costs associated with them. Some recommendations can be implemented with few additional funds. Some involve considerable additional expenditures. However, such highly expensive items need not be automatically discarded since it is possible that some funds may be saved or may be reallocated from other areas. However, it is equally likely additional expenditures will be required. We strongly believe that such additional costs are fully justified to address the challenges facing Philadelphia schools and students.

We believe that the first five recommendations will significantly enhance the chances of academic success among all Philadelphia students. However, we must also recognize that these proposals cannot solve the educational needs of all students. Thus, in later recommendations we propose interventions of increasing intensity that identify problems and mandate specific actions before students drop out.

Recommendation 1: Schools should be divided into smaller units or houses to which both students and teachers are assigned for several years. Among the features of these units are: unit size of 200 to 400 students who are heterogeneously grouped by academic achievement and school year; faculty teams; thematic focus; a social support to assist students and teachers.

Recommendation 2: Take steps to increase sustained adult contact within units by assigning teachers to unit instructional teams, developing schedules that place students with the same teacher for several years, and introducing other adults into the schooling process for extended periods of contact.

Recommendation 3: We propose that the district devise ways to substantially reduce the average class size in core course areas.

Recommendation 4: Services to students provided by schools must be marked by a comprehensive approach that recognizes the multiple causes of poor academic performance. It therefore includes educational support, remediation,

instruction in coping skills, counseling, and referrals to external agencies.

Recommendation 5: Infuse alternative instructional methodologies as a way to stimulate, excite and encourage youth to achieve; provide teachers with the training and resources fundamentally to change how they help children learn.

Recommendation 6. Establish a system of academic and student social services within school units to identify achievement and other problems early, devise plans to ameliorate their effects and make effective referrals for students whose needs cannot be met in the unit.

Recommendation 7. Expand existing alternative educational opportunities and develop new programs for students whose needs cannot be met within the individual school units.

Recommendation 8. Examine the wide range of regulations, assumptions and practices currently in place that affect how schools operate and education is delivered. Identify those that appear to push students unintentionally away from high academic performance and towards dropping out. Devise and implement modifications to reduce these barriers.

Recommendation 9: Devise a strategy for fully engaging the community in the process of public education in a manner that is goal-directed and meets the needs of the students. This effort must be based on a series of contracts and agreements between the community and the school district, individual schools and units, teachers and students that define expectations for academic improvement and expectations of community support.

CONCLUSION

The tasks of improving the quality of education and increasing the chances that students will graduate from high school are inextricably entwined and can be effectively accomplished by pursuing both simultaneously.

Philadelphia Public Schools face a substantial challenge in meeting the needs of its students. Only by a reasoned, system-wide approach can substantial change and improvement occur. Important steps have already been taken. The recommendations in this report offer a guide for next phase of the journey.

I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents a set of policy options available to the School District of Philadelphia to improve student performance and keep youth in school through graduation. It describes what is known from national programs and research literature on such issues, reviews a variety of initiatives in Philadelphia, and offers policy recommendations that draw from national and local approaches.[1]

THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

This report was prepared at the request of the Executive Director of the Office of Planning of the Philadelphia Public Schools. The District, like other urban school districts, has very high dropout rates. While estimates of the exact dropout rate level in Philadelphia depend on the method used to calculate it, it seems likely that the rate is above 30 percent[2]--that is, of an entering freshman class, approximately one-third of all students will not graduate from high school within 4 years.

High dropout rates were not the sole impetus for this work. Under the leadership of its superintendent, Dr. Clayton, the school district has made great strides during the last five years in standardizing the curriculum and ensuring that every youth in Philadelphia has access to an education comparable to his/her peers. With the standard curriculum came explicit academic performance standards and their citywide implementation through the new promotion policies. Several years after the standardized curriculum and promotion policies have been put in place, it is easier to see the kinds of problems that need to be addressed. Further, in order to ensure that these new standards will not have unintended negative effects, policies must be put in place to address the needs of students who are not meeting them.

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[1]The report is neither intended to produce a full scale quantitative assessment of dropping out in Philadelphia Public Schools nor a comprehensive evaluation of existing initiatives. Instead, the goal of the report is to review the research literature and findings from programs throughout the nation and Philadelphia and distill a set of recommendations and policy options for reducing dropout rates.

[2]Annual dropout rates hover in the 9 to 10 percent range. A study being conducted by the Office of Research and Evaluation is tracking a cohort of youth from the ninth grade through graduation. Preliminary results indicate that the 4-year dropout rate may be above 30 percent.

The authors of the report were given three directives to guide their work. First, the school district asked that the focus be on improving student performance as well as dropping out. Within this context, we were asked to emphasize broad system-wide change above implementation of many modest dropout prevention initiatives serving limited numbers of individuals. Second, we were asked to limit our investigation to grades 5 through 12 since major initiatives in preschool and kindergarten through fourth grade had already begun.[3] Last, to the extent possible, we were asked to provide insights that could inform the planned restructuring of comprehensive high schools.[4]

The local concern and context in which this effort was placed are similar to a number of concerns and trends at the national level. There is growing national awareness of the increasing costs of dropping out and lack of basic skills. While dropout rates have remained constant over the last twenty-five years, the costs of dropping out are much higher now than they were twenty-five years ago.

There is a quite different picture for individuals entering the labor force in 1988 than existed a decade ago when the absence of a high school education did not preclude a living wage. As recently as the mid-1970s, blue-collar manufacturing jobs offered high school dropouts reasonable wages. But, since 1975, when U.S. workers in general entered a period of wage stagnation, there has been an <u>erosion</u> of earning power among dropouts.

> "A comparison of the real mean earnings of twenty- to twenty-four year old high school dropouts in 1975 with a similar cohort in 1984 shows that earnings declined by 41.6 percent from $11,210 to $6,552, while earnings of high school graduates, those with some college and those with a B.S. or B.A. declined by smaller amounts" (Berlin and Sum, 1987).

Additionally, the authors point out the gap between the mean annual income of a high school dropout and that of a high

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[3]In an additional effort to limit the scope of the study, certain topics that were less directly related to dropout prevention--special education, English as a second language, etc.--were not fully examined though we recognize that they can play an important role in dropout prevention.

[4]The Superintendent of the Philadelphia Public Schools has announced her intention to evaluate the mission of the district's comprehensive high schools and develop a strategy of reform to help them serve students better.

school graduate has widened from 31 percent in the early 1960s to 59 percent in the early 1980s (Berlin and Sum, 1987).

Besides the concern about the consequences of dropping out for wages and employment, it is becoming increasingly clear that youth must not only graduate but must have acquired the basic skills necessary to perform the jobs of the future. With the continuation of the shift from the agricultural/manufacturing economy to one dominated by the service and information sectors, there is an increasing technologization of jobs accompanied by a rise in the basic skills levels required for satisfactory job performance. It is not only important that youth finish high school but also that they acquire excellent basic skills so that they can receive more training. Workforce 2000 reports that the majority of new jobs created between now and the year 2000 will require some postsecondary education (Johnston, 1987).

Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that when one considers a range of behaviors appearing in early adolescence (adolescent pregnancy, substance abuse and criminal behavior), poor basic skills and early school failure seem to be inextricably entangled with them (Berlin and Sum, 1987). While we are aware of the controversy in the literature with respect to which factor is the ultimate cause--school failure, poor basic skills, or the problem behavior itself--the evidence on adolescent pregnancies seems unambiguous. Sum (1986) examined the school performance of girls in the months before they ultimately became pregnant and found that they were performing well below their peers who did not become pregnant. Dryfoos (1987) provides data supporting this point as well. Furthermore, Furstenberg et al. (1987) report that two factors emerge that predict which young adolescent mothers will become long-term welfare dependents: poor early academic performance and a repeat pregnancy within the first two years after the adolescent birth. These and similar findings point to the need for keeping youth in school and ensuring good basic skills acquisition.

Every urban youth has an important role to play in the workforce of tomorrow. Demographic trends indicate that the workforce of the future will grow more slowly, become older, have more females and become more racially and ethnically diverse and will include more workers who grew up in disadvantaged families (Johnston, 1987). One in three workers in the year 2000 will be minority (Hodgkinson, 1985). It is within urban schools where most minority students are enrolled and where the greatest signs of strain are apparent. Yet urban schools are becoming increasingly incapable of either keeping students in school or adequately preparing them for successful entry into the labor market or enrollment in postsecondary education.

Besides accepting the importance of both increasing academic performance and high school graduation rates, interventions must deal with them as inextricably linked. To assume they are separate and treat them independently may lead to policies having unintentionally adverse results. For example, raising academic standards for graduation--an approach pursued by many states in recent years--can result in lower graduation rates if the needs and circumstances of the most disadvantaged students are not considered in the overall plan (see Levin, 1985). Similarly, programs designed to improve attendance without helping students succeed once they do attend can produce greater disenchantment with the schooling process. Thus, there is increasing awareness at the national level of the need to encourage youth to stay in school, improve their basic skills and expand interventions dealing with both issues.

There also seems to be growing national consensus on two other issues. First, following a period when many schools adopted programs promising to immediately overcome the dropout problem inexpensively, there is growing awareness among school districts and educators that there are no quick, inexpensive solutions and that reducing dropout rates requires a strategy that is firmly based in the whole schooling process. For example, the recently released report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1988) offers a range of long-term, high investment recommendations requiring considerable restructuring of the school setting and additional local, state and federal funds for programs like Head Start and Chapter I.

Second, there is growing national consensus that the demands on schools are expanding. Youth have a variety of problems that act as barriers to successful academic performance. Their basic needs range from good nutrition to health care to adequate shelter. While these issues have to be addressed so that children will be able to learn, the schools cannot meet these growing demands alone. At best, schools can partially relieve some of the most apparent effects of poverty but cannot totally overcome them without substantial, coinciding action by the broader community. Thus, there has been increasingly frequent calls for linking schools more closely with municipal and regional social service agencies and organizations to help meet these students' needs. In addition, the private sector has been identified as a potential source of additional support.[5]

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[5]Ironically, these calls for greater community involvement have been heard precisely at the time when federal, state and local governments have reduced their support of urban schools and

(continued...)

PROJECT GOALS AND METHODS

This project has as its goal to answer three broad questions:

- What can be learned from the literature on causes of dropping out and dropout prevention strategies concerning the most effective mechanisms to improve student performance and keep youth in school through graduation? What are their critical elements?

- What school retention efforts currently exist in Philadelphia? What are their characteristics, how extensive are they throughout the system and how effective are they?

- What are the policy options available to the district and its schools?

We sought to address these questions through the following tasks:

Review of Existing Literature

As dropout prevention has loomed as one of the critical issues in urban public education, a considerable body of research and policy literature has emerged. To date, countless causes and a correspondingly great number of "solutions" at all levels of the educational system (often supported solely by anecdotal evidence) have been advanced. What is clear is that no single panacea has been found. Our first task was to review the existing literature and program descriptions or solutions in urban school systems to discern what promising and/or empirically-supported successful programs have been tried. Second, we identified the critical elements in these programs that might be adopted in Philadelphia.

Discussions with Leading Researchers and Policymakers

The second task, which was undertaken concurrently with the review of literature, was contacting knowledgeable experts about keeping youth in school in urban school systems. In our discussions with these individuals, we obtained their recommendations on important interventions and policies, solicited their advice on ways to infuse principles found in the dropout

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[5](...continued)
social service agencies. There is little evidence that these reductions in government support have been balanced by increased support of the private sector.

prevention literature throughout a school system, and asked them to identify schools or systems where policies based on these principles had been implemented.

Discussions with Philadelphia School District Officials

Our third task was interviewing district officials and other community educational leaders to obtain an overview about current efforts underway in Philadelphia to keep youth in school and learn about specific programs already in place.

Observations of Selected Philadelphia Programs and Initiatives

Our final task was to observe a selected set of the programs that were already operating in Philadelphia that seek improved academic performance and reduced chances of dropping out.

OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter II summarizes the literature on causes of poor performance and dropping out and suggests implications of this literature for this planning effort.

- Chapter III reviews the national literature on dropout prevention efforts and distills a list of principles that form a basis for improving academic performance and reducing dropout rates.

- Chapter IV reviews selected dropout prevention and academic performance improvement efforts in Philadelphia and ways in which programs in Philadelphia have implemented the principles outlined in the preceding chapter.

- Chapter V presents a framework for action in a series of recommendations aimed at mainstreaming throughout the district many of the principles found in the academic achievement and dropout prevention literature. The recommendations call for broad systemwide changes requiring decisive school and communitywide action. Some of the recommendations can be implemented immediately; others will require additional planning before adoption throughout the district.

II. THE CAUSES OF DROPPING OUT

This chapter reviews the literature that describes why students drop out[6] of high school. Such a review of the literature may provide insights on the most serious causes that are amenable to intervention as well as the most effective points at which to intervene. We included a broad range of articles and monographs in our review, including those with empirical bases, more theoretical frameworks, or both (see Bickel et al., 1986; Fine, 1986; Natriello, 1986; Ochoa et al., 1987; and Wehlage and Rutter, 1986). Researchers and policymakers have advanced a number of ideas about why students leave school before graduating. Their approaches can generally be divided into three groups: most frequently, those focused on characteristics of students; occasionally, those focused on characteristics of schools; and rarely, those focused on the relationship or interaction between the student and the school that leads to dropping out behavior.

Although there is a fairly large body of research on why students drop out, much of it is inconclusive. By this we mean that a straightforward reading of this literature does not provide obvious answers about factors easily susceptible to policy manipulation or optimal intervention points. There are three central weaknesses in much of the available research.

First, researchers often do not distinguish underlying causal factors from those merely associated with dropping out. That is, some articles present characteristics of students who drop out, but do not develop a causal model[7] (i.e., using multivariate analysis techniques) that explains how these characteristics are related and affect the chances of dropping out

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[6]In this chapter, the concept of dropping out is used broadly to refer to leaving high school for an extended period of time. For our purposes, dropouts include students who decided to leave, drifted away, were pushed out, and so on. The literature makes distinctions between these behaviors in order to stress the different ways in which leaving school becomes manifest. We do not exclude any of these definitions from our discussion.

[7]By calling for causal analysis, we do not pretend that it alone will yield an effective dropout prevention strategy. However, such an approach can be an important technique for debunking a variety of "explanations" or purported "causes" based on misunderstanding or misinterpretation of correlations between some factors and dropping out. In addition, the approach may reveal other factors whose effect had been obscured in discussions grounded in simple statistical associations.

controlling for other factors or conditions. For example, a number of authors note that black students are more likely to drop out than are white students, but do so without considering the relationship between race and a host of other factors such as poverty or being from a single parent family that affect school outcomes. Relying on associations would indicate that minority status was an important causal factor whereas, as will be explained more fully later, race disappears as a "cause" of dropping out when poverty status or coming from a female-headed family is held constant.

Second, much of the literature that describes who drops out of high school treats dropping out as an event and not as a process. Much of the literature begins its analysis at the high school years (or at age 14) and omits analyses using data about earlier periods in students' lives. Many focus on a number of events that immediately precede a student's leaving school: frequent suspensions for disciplinary problems, excessive truancy, becoming pregnant, or being retained in grade a number of times. Evidence suggests that these events are themselves symptoms of repeated school failures or the breakdown of important aspects of the child's life outside of school and are not the underlying causes of dropping out. Tracing the sequence of various behaviors would contribute to a better understanding of dropping out as a developmental process.

Third, there simply are very little data that consider the interaction between school factors that might contribute to dropping out and characteristics of the students who leave. Some multivariate analyses using the National Longitudinal Study (NLS) and High School and Beyond data sets usefully examine how characteristics of students lead to their leaving school early. The effective schools literature, an attempt to isolate the common characteristics of schools that are successful in teaching students, provides helpful information about effects of school factors (e.g. size, tracking).[8] However, a growing body of researchers (Edmonds, 1979, 1982; Bickel et al., 1986; Ochoa et al., 1987; Wehlage and Rutter, 1986; and Natriello, 1986) note there is virtually no research looking at school factors and student characteristics in combination.

The remainder of this chapter summarizes the findings concerning the relationship between student characteristics, school characteristics (and the interaction between them) and dropping out. It lays out implications of research findings for developing interventions. It closes with a discussion of the

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[8]Until recently, the effective schools literature has focused primarily on the processes and factors affecting the delivery of education in elementary schools.

consistency of data from Philadelphia with these national findings.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

The most traditional research approach in dropout literature uses the student as the unit of analysis and identifies a number of individual characteristics that put students at risk or predispose them to dropping out. The literature consistently identifies poverty as a key predictor (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986; Barro, 1984; and Rumberger, 1983). Based on an analysis of two longitudinal national data bases--High School and Beyond and the NLS--low parental socioeconomic status during the adolescent years is the strongest predictor of dropping out from school. When the effects of poverty are disaggregated, the most relevant factors associated with low socioeconomic status are parental educational attainment (Hill, 1979; and Mare, 1980), and a disrupted family structure and the poverty associated with it (Howell and Frese, 1982; Ekstrom et al., 1986). Other associated risk factors include being part of a large family (Hill, 1979; and Mare, 1980), a lack of support for education, and little educational material in the home (Ekstrom et al., 1986).

A few authors (Ochoa et al., 1987; Fine, 1986; and Bickel et al., 1986) argue that the effect of poverty on dropping out is further exacerbated by the fact that poor youth recognize a lack of payoff from schooling, or are less likely to accept prevailing school status or authority structures within the school system (Elliott, 1966; and Fine, 1986). Examining the issue from another perspective, Ogbu (1974, 1978, 1985) offers a disturbing explanation of poor academic performance among black youth arguing that educational achievement has become identified with being white or acceding to the dominant culture. He suggests that highly able minority students may suppress their academic achievement under pressure from their friends and associates in order to fit in with their peers. Such a pattern of poor performance, while initially conscious, may be later reinforced within the school setting and become a self-fulfilling prophesy.

Although some authors (Ekstrom et al., 1986; Rumberger, 1983; Wehlage and Rutter, 1986; and Barro, 1984) also cite being minority as an important factor putting students at risk largely because dropout rates vary substantially by race/ethnicity, these differences are found to disappear for blacks when socioeconomic status or income is held constant (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986) and for Hispanics when the language predominantly spoken in the home is held constant (Ochoa et al., 1987). For example, in the latter study, Ochoa and his colleagues found that, in some limited data bases from Austin and Los Angeles, Hispanic students from households where English is

the primary language had dropout rates equivalent to national averages, while students from Spanish speaking homes had the much higher dropout rates normally reported as typical for Hispanic students generally.

Additional evidence suggests that poor students are often at-risk from the time they enter the school system. Studies of early childhood development indicate that children of young adolescents approach school language deficient and unprepared to learn compared to children with older parents (Miller, 1987). Problems associated with poverty--low birth weight, poor nutrition, inadequate health care--contribute to placing poor children at-risk before entering school. In a study prepared for the Philadelphia School District, Yancey et al., (1987) used census tract-level indicators of prenatal and neonatal health (birth weight, APGAR scores, prenatal care usage) and neighborhood characteristics (proportion of female-headed households, percent minority, socioeconomic status, proportion of teenage mothers) to predict school performance (percent of students retained in grade and percent who drop out). They found strong negative relationships in these aggregate-level data between both neighborhood characteristics and indicators of prenatal and early childhood health and school success and completion. Ochoa et al., (1987), in considering why Hispanic students in Texas and California had disproportionately higher dropout rates, found that "in 80% of the cases, dropouts had reading problems that were identified as early as the third grade." Bickel et al., (1986) estimate that a review of the available evidence would show that 70 to 75 percent of early school leavers evidenced poor achievement in early grades.

It is important to note that, while researchers generally agree that poor achievement is a precursor of dropping out, most separate poor achievement from ability. Some assert that ability has a discernible independent effect in early school years (Sewell and Hauser, 1975). However, it is very difficult to ever discern the effects of ability by statistical methods because even the earliest ability measures are confounded with the effects of low socioeconomic status. Others state that it is not clear that dropouts have, on average, less ability than students who graduate. Some evidence (Fine, 1983; Lojoie and Shore, 1981; and Elliott et al., 1966) suggests that a substantial subset of dropouts are, in fact, very able, though their achievement does not reflect their ability.

Students who fail to catch up in early grades are very likely to enter a cycle of poor achievement whose consequences lead to dropping out behavior. The consequences of poor achievement that have been associated with dropping out include grade retention, being overage for grade, frustration and status deprivation, low self-esteem, and as the student becomes older, patterns of truancy and delinquency, often punished by school

suspensions (Ekstrom, 1986; Ochoa et al., 1987; and Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1987).

Some students, perhaps having recognized that school success is outside their reach, may also take on adult roles that eventually conflict with attending school, such as jobs and parenting. Although the public perception is that working and parenting cause dropping out, recent evidence suggests that both may be precipitated by school failure, rather than the reverse. (For example, Dryfoos (1987) and others (Furstenberg et al., 1987) note that students most likely to become pregnant are those with the poorest school performance or those from the lowest achievement levels.)[9]

The outcome of this complicated process can be an explicit or implicit decision to leave school, at least temporarily. This decision can be manifested by a particular event (becoming pregnant or engaging in overt delinquency leading to expulsion) or the student may gradually just stop attending. We must recognize, however, that the event that immediately precedes dropping out is probably not the causal factor; it is simply another stage in the process.

Many researchers cite data indicating that being retained in grade has quite pronounced effects on school leaving (Featherstone, 1986; Hess and Lauber, 1985). The notion that being retained in grade makes youth feel less attached to schooling and thus more disposed to drop out makes some intuitive sense. However, arguments that focus on retention in grade as an explanation of dropping out run the risk of reifying an event that is, in reality, a culmination of many factors including prior low academic performance, low teacher expectations and other negative school experiences. Thus, while being retained in grade may be proximate to dropping out, a policy advocating the elimination of retention in grade is an inadequate solution. Rather, strategies must be devised to improve academic performance and raise teacher expectations before a student risks being retained in grade and mechanisms must be estab-

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[9]On the other hand, socialization towards the acceptance of some adult roles may also affect the chances of dropping out. Ekstrom et al. (1986), for example, note that young women who hold more traditional views on gender roles are more likely to drop out than are women with more egalitarian views. In addition, analyses by the Hispanic Policy Development Project (1987) suggest that the combination of pregnancy and marriage greatly increases the chances of dropping out. Support within traditional communities for early marriage and childbearing may reduce the apparent need to remain and succeed in school. Trying to disentangle the effects of socialization and school failure on dropping out is virtually impossible in such instances.

lished to reduce the stigma for those students who are retained.

SCHOOL FACTORS

While most dropout research has focused on why certain types of students leave school, some has concentrated on how characteristics of schools affect student performance and graduation rates. There is evidence from the effectiveness literature and elsewhere that schooling can either exacerbate or ameliorate the effects of poverty. The effectiveness research was an attempt, in fact, to isolate the characteristics of schools that were succeeding in educating large numbers of children at risk. Jencks, in his preface to Barbara Heyns' monograph on summer learning (1978), discusses the ameliorative effects of schooling. He contends that "schools do more than other institutions to equalize incentives for rich and poor students to learn." Other authors, such as Fine (1986), Oakes (1985), and Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that schools reproduce class differences through policies that intentionally or unintentionally distribute educational opportunities unequally along class lines.

Regardless of one's perspective, there is research to indicate that school factors do affect achievement. Size, including class size, school size, teacher load and number of classes taught by individual teachers (Sizer, 1984; Wehlage and Rutter, 1986; Hamilton, 1986; Bickel et al., 1987; Ascher and Flaxman, 1987; and Bennett, 1987) has been found to be one such factor.

Another school factor believed to affect achievement is sustained adult contact for students within the system. For example, dropout rates are correlated with number of teacher job moves and transfer requests (Combs and Cooley, 1968), the extent to which students perceive that teachers care about them and expectations for students through tracking or curriculum offerings (Oakes, 1985; and Gamoran and Berends, 1987).

Finally, as one would expect, various instructional approaches have been shown to be linked to academic outcomes. For example, Earle et al., (1987) note that many traditional teaching methods (for example, individual oral quizzing on class materials, emphasis on independent learning) put girls at an academic disadvantage in classes. In contrast, learning approaches in which girls are more likely to succeed, such as cooperative learning strategies requiring less assertiveness, are infrequently used.

Others have listed numerous stumbling blocks to school completion that have their etiology within the school. These include limited, inflexible hours, lack of child care (Earle et al.,

1987), yearlong credits which discourage youth who do poorly early in the school year to continue coming to school, and out-of-school suspensions.

INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

A third area of research, though still largely undeveloped, looks at the relationship between the characteristics of students and schools that can lead to dropping out. In Dropping Out: How Much Do Schools Contribute to the Problem, Wehlage and Rutter (1986) conclude that "student characteristics in combination with certain school conditions are responsible for students' decisions to leave school early." That is, some student-level factors--age, cultural background, family circumstances--which alone do not always cause students to leave school, under certain school conditions--large school units, inaccessible faculty, rigid instructional approaches--may become magnified or exaggerated and cause students to leave. Similarly, certain school conditions--large class sizes, strict discipline--may be associated with dropping out with only a segment of the student population whose individual characteristics interact poorly with these school factors. In both situations, neither individual nor school factors independently determine the chances of dropping out. Rather, both combine as a catalyst for dropping out.

In addition, one key area of interaction between student- and school-level factors must not be overlooked. Low expectations for some youth (i.e, those who are poor, minority, or come from single-family households) can be a catalyst manifest in many ways: limited investments in terms of budget, staff, and programs for schools serving disadvantaged students; use of watered-down curricula materials to meet the presumed low abilities of these children; and, tracking of disadvantaged students into low-prestige, unchallenging and ultimately debilitating instructional programs with limited prospects for advancement in the future. The pernicious nature of such discrimination can mean that whole segments of the population are inadequately served and lead to significant rates of dropping out among them.

Our own conclusion, based on information presented in the preceding sections, is that becoming at risk of dropping out is a dynamic condition that weakens or strengthens depending on the interaction between students' characteristics and the schools. In particular, we believe that failing to provide children with an adequate opportunity to "catch-up" sets in motion a process that leads to a student's dropping out, though that process can be masked by a particular event, such as pregnancy, coincident with a student's leaving school.

While most of the evidence points to the general model described above--poverty and early ability interacting with school factors to create poor school achievement; poor achievement interacting with community and personal factors to lead to academic and personal frustrations that culminate in a student's leaving school--this model implicitly assumes that the act of leaving school is a personal failure for the student. A few authors argue against this perspective, noting that school leaving may be either a protest against an inflexible system or recognition of differential payoffs of schooling for different kinds of youth. These authors provide the important insight that, for some students, leaving school can be construed as a rational reaction to the opportunities presented.

Without accepting or rejecting this conclusion, one can use it to help develop a causal model slightly different from that posited above. In this refined model, as in the first, dropping out is a dynamic process. However, it is set in motion not by poor achievement _per se_, but by a poor fit between the prevailing school structure and particular characteristics and needs of students.

Suggested personal characteristics include an inability to accept a perceived injustice (Fine, 1986, 1987); elements of "differentness," such as language, that schools are poorly equipped to address (Ochoa _et al._, 1987) and being intellectually gifted. Data presented by Combs and Cooley (1968) provide some support to the notion that "differentness" is a meaningful characteristic of dropouts. While confirming differences in ability, they also found that students in their control groups (defined as random subsets of high school graduates who did not attend postsecondary school) scored significantly higher than male dropouts on tidiness, calmness, vigor, self-confidence, culture, mature personality and sociability while male dropouts scored significantly higher on leadership and impulsiveness.

Adding the concept of differentness as a causal factor to the general model may help to account for those students whose dropout path does not begin with poor reading or poor achievement in early grades, or who come from relatively advantaged households. Further, it underscores the importance of school factors in understanding dropout behavior since differentness has no meaning except in the context of a particular instructional or school system. Finally, it is important to recognize that differentness does not inevitably lead to dropping out. Many students who might be considered apart from their peers, for example, gifted students or Asian students, succeed in school. Apparently, their differentness can be accommodated within the normal school setting.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGNING INTERVENTIONS

The understanding of causation presented in this chapter has a number of implications for designing dropout prevention strategies. First, it strongly indicates that dropping out is a process and not an event--a developmental process involving a complicated interaction among students' family backgrounds, early ability, their achievement in school, the school's ability to enhance or interfere with that achievement and personal stresses within and outside of the schools.

The first implication is that, to be successful, dropout prevention efforts need to take into account the interrelationships that drive dropping out behavior. This means that 1) they ought to compensate for some of the manifestations of poverty; 2) they should consider changing school factors as seriously as they do student behaviors in response to those factors; 3) they ought to focus on root causes rather than precipitating events; and 4) because learning and failure are cumulative, the earlier one intervenes once a problem is recognized, the more efficiently and effectively one is likely to address it.

This initial implication leads to the conclusion that dropout preventions need to be comprehensive, attending to a student's personal as well as academic needs. While it is not true that all poor students face disrupted home lives, it is generally believed that poverty creates stress on family resources and may cause family mobility that interferes with schooling. The utility of attending to these is confirmed by the fact that the few dropout prevention programs with documented success all include ways to provide very specific social supports to students, including opportunities to earn money, referrals to health and welfare agencies, counseling and, in some cases, broader attempts to work with the family on these same issues.

The second point argues for broad, systemwide intervention in order to increase the likelihood that more students will succeed in school. The kinds of school factors generally thought to affect dropping out (e.g. size, instructional methods, sustained adult contact, tracking policies, etc.) prevail throughout school systems. If they need fixing, they need to be fixed wherever they occur.

The third point comes from an understanding of the probable link between dysfunctional school behaviors (truancy, failing grades, delinquency, teen pregnancy) that often immediately precede a student's dropping out or being pushed out of school and patterns of school failure and frustration in earlier grades. It implies that programs designed to address the most obvious problem are probably "too little, too late". Successful interventions need to incorporate remediation along with

attention to whatever specific problem is being addressed. Prevention, the more desirable approach, will be required much earlier to break the cycle.

The fourth point also speaks directly to the link between academic achievement and dropping out. If one accepts the notion that poor academic achievement begins a chain of frustration and failure that ultimately leads to a student's active or passive decision to leave school, as the causal literature strongly implies, then dropout prevention efforts must begin with early attention to academic skills, continual monitoring of student performance, systems of regular and frequent rewards for achievement and mechanisms to intervene whenever students falter in these areas.

It is also clear from the causal literature that there is no single best time to intervene in a student's career to prevent his or her leaving school. Too often, researchers and practitioners have a narrow perspective of the optimal intervention point. For example, some literature indicates that the inability to read at the end of third grade puts a student in severe jeopardy for future academic success. However, this same literature also notes that the reading problems are best remedied in grades one and two and should not be delayed until the third year.

Similarly, the ninth grade has historically been identified as a crucial point in a student's career at which the decision is made to drop out. However, some literature (for example, Troob, 1985) indicates that the rise in dropout rates among ninth graders is a function of many factors including a history of poor academic performance in earlier grades resulting in being held back. As a result, many students enter ninth grade 15 or 16 years old or older and leave school when the law no longer compels the school to keep them. This is not to dismiss the importance of substantial pressures facing students entering the ninth grade (Felner et al., 1982). In fact, many of our recommendations speak of ways to ameliorate the pressures associated with entering high school and adolescence. Others cite the 7th or 8th grade because it is at this time that the transition into adolescence--a difficult time for many youth--has its greatest impact on school performance.

The irony is that different policymakers pick different points as the exclusive place to intervene. The research does not point to the validity of selecting one or two such points. However, it does suggest (1) that early intervention is necessary but that schools must be prepared to deal with students who, for a variety of reasons, suddenly exhibit pre-dropout behavior in later schools years; (2) affirmation of student intellect and success at every point in the educational system must proceed simultaneously with remediation as a hallmark of

dealing with all students to defuse a cycle of failure; (3) remediating problem situations when they appear is critical because failure is cumulative; and (4) that grades 6 through 9 are exceptionally difficult because they serve students confronting the stresses of new educational demands compounded with significant personal and social pressures associated with adolescence such as emerging sexuality, peer pressure and expanded opportunities for substance abuse.

In concluding this chapter, we note that data from the Philadelphia Public Schools are quite consistent with the concept that dropping out is a process and not an event and all that it implies: there is no one best place to intervene and remedial steps must be taken as soon as school failure begins to appear.

Table I presents student promotion and retention patterns in grades 1 through 8 for non-Special Education students in the Philadelphia Public Schools for the 1986/87 school year. The data are based on performance during the school year and do not take into account youth who may have been promoted through successful performance in summer school.[10] These data are highly consistent with the notion that dropping out is a process and not an event. They show that students are failing in large proportions at all grade levels, especially grades 1, 7 and 8. That the levels are high in first grade may point to the influence of factors outside the school that predispose youth to school failure. The data are also consistent with the need to remediate as soon as failing begins, for the cumulative effects of failing can be seen in the later grades, especially grades 7 and 8. Further, the data point to special needs of adolescents systemwide. In 7th and 8th grade, only 66.6 and 69.6 percent of the youth, respectively, are successfully completing the grade through performance in the school year and roughly 10 percent of youth in these grades are failing them for the second consecutive year. These data support the need to intervene at all levels and to aid students as soon as they begin to fail.

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[10]Summer school data are excluded because they are not currently disaggregated by grade. However, discussions with key personnel at the school district suggest that the numbers presented do not seriously overstate the problem. Among the 17,712 youth in grades 1 to 8 who were retained in grade for the first time in June 1987, roughly 30 percent enrolled in summer school and about 20 percent of them were promoted as a result. This means that roughly 6 percent of all youth retained in grade for the first time in June 1987 were promoted as a result of summer school. Only 10 percent of the youth who did not meet criteria (DNMC) enrolled in summer school, and a very small number of those were promoted as a result. In short, the inclusion of summer school data could alter the data by about 6 to 7 percent.

The data show a very troublesome problem for the district revealed by the adoption of promotion policy guidelines in 1984. The general promotion policy sets clear standards using both teacher assessment and districtwide testing to determine if a student deserves promotion to the next grade. Students who fail to meet the criteria are retained in grade. By June, 1986, two years after the promotion policy guidelines were enacted more than 5,400 students in grades 1 through 8 failed the same grade for two consecutive years. The promotion policy specifically provides that these students be placed (but not promoted) in the next grade. About 3 to 4 percent of first through sixth graders were retained in grade for two consecutive years before being advanced to the next grade. Among 7th and 8th graders, however, the proportion of students in this category expands substantially to about 10 percent. These students represent a significant problem for the district. During the current school year they face a higher level of work though they failed to master the materials of the previous grade over two years. It is likely that most will be unable to succeed in this next grade and will fail again.

The dropout problem facing urban schools, including those in Philadelphia, did not emerge overnight. Many factors at many levels--student, family, neighborhood, school and community--contribute to the problem. Further, as Mann (1986) notes, dropping out rates have been stubbornly resistant to efforts to reduce them. Any initiative to combat dropping out cannot rely solely on old, comfortable strategies that have been tried in the past without success. Rather, the initiative must be willing to take risks, must approach the problem with an openness to experimentation and a deliberate willingness to challenge outmoded beliefs and patterns of doing education. Approaching the task without such forthright commitment will likely condemn it to futility.

Table I

STUDENTS (EXCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS)
PROMOTED AND RETAINED IN GRADES 1-8, 1986-1987

	Promoted in June 1987		Retained in Grade in June 1987		Does Not Meet Criteria June 1987*	
Grade	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	12616	76.1	3400	20.5	572	3.4
2	11913	80.2	2427	16.3	514	3.5
3	10750	80.5	2084	15.6	520	3.9
4	10318	81.0	1902	14.9	525	4.1
5	9649	84.6	1295	11.4	456	4.0
6	9666	85.9	1226	10.9	363	3.2
7	8344	66.6	2862	22.8	1322	10.6
8	8367	69.6	2516	21.0	1132	9.4
Total	81623	77.9	17712	16.9	5404	5.2

*Does not meet criteria for promotion but retained in June 1986. Moved to next grade by policy.

III. LESSONS FROM NATIONAL PROGRAMS

This chapter summarizes what is known about effective dropout prevention strategies based on a review of research and policy literature. It reviews the kinds of programs that have been designed, what is known of their effectiveness, and discusses general principles in designing dropout prevention strategies that emerge from looking across programs. In the previous chapter we described how dropping out was a process and not an event. Thus, we concluded that to be effective, dropout prevention strategies must adopt systemic approaches that seek to address the whole range of a student's education and all levels of the student's career.

Ironically, as will be seen below, virtually all approaches to dropout prevention are rooted in individual programmatic strategies. We are left with a range of separate interventions and no systemic models of dropout prevention. Our task, then, is to extract concrete lessons from the experiences in these programs that can be implemented within an entire school district. Such an approach is fraught with difficulties. Most important, are the elements of programmatic approaches applicable at a school or system level? Frankly, we cannot unequivocally assert that they are. However, we believe that a careful review of the causes of dropping out and strategies to reduce student attrition can provide basic principles that are transferable and adaptable to traditional school settings. Despite our concern about applying programmatic lessons to district and school settings, we are firmly convinced that continuing emphases on individual programs will be inadequate in the face of high urban school dropout rates.

This chapter begins by broadly characterizing the literature subsumed under the general heading of dropout prevention. It then analyzes what is known about what works in dropout prevention. For this discussion, information is divided into three categories based on the level of available evidence. These categories are: 1) programs whose research meets rigorous research standards including a reliable comparison group and reasonable follow-up rates for participants and comparison group members; 2) programs providing some evidence on outcomes and comparisons to national or local averages or some comparison group; and 3) information about programs identified as exemplary where evidence is qualitative rather than quantitative, or summaries of such information prepared by other

authors.[11] The final section of the chapter presents a set of principles for dropout prevention programming that combines insights from programs, national actors, and the literature on causes of dropping out.

It is crucial to note at the outset that this literature review does not point to simple solutions to the dropout problem. First, as was noted in the last chapter, the literature on causes is not so clear as to perfectly identify the place and mechanism of intervention. Second, there is surprisingly little credible research evidence about whether or not a given intervention works. There are many small programs but little systematic investigation of them. Finally, even putting strict rules of evidence aside, there has been little widespread or consistent success in reducing dropout rates generally. As Dale Mann says:

> "Peng reports that the high school dropout rate for pupils entering the fifth grade has been 25 percent since 1958. When an indicator is that sticky--25% for 25 years--it says something about the power of interventions being applied. Despite the amazing array of things that have been and are being tried, no one should talk about solutions" (Mann, 1986).

To put this point another way, even if the application of various dropout prevention programs were construed as a natural experiment, one would have to conclude that this experiment is failing.[12]

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[11]It must be noted that there is always a lag between program implementation and release of research findings. Thus, the paucity of strong positive effects for many programs may partially be a function of limited, well-documented, completed research rather than poor program design. Nevertheless, considerable caution must be exercised in adopting program strategies where research is unavailable or incomplete.

[12]In fact, Census data indicate that dropout rates have decreased somewhat for blacks and whites since 1970. Given the increasing concentration of poverty in urban ghettos (Wilson), and the link between poverty and dropping out, even a constant dropout rate may suggest improvement in the ability of public schools to hold at-risk youth. Nonetheless, we support Mann's position that, overall, there is very little positive evidence suggesting that the dropout problem is being solved.

SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE

This section describes the kind of programs that were reviewed and assesses their usefulness for designing new interventions or systemwide approaches. In preparing this report, we reviewed over 200 books, articles, program descriptions and research reports. To identify effective programs, we relied in part on published compendia, such as Orr's Keeping Students in School (1987); the National Dissemination Study Group's Education Programs That Work (1987); School Dropouts, Survey of Local Programs, prepared by the General Accounting Office (GAO, 1987); and Dropout Prevention, a Book of Sources, published by the National Committee for Citizens in Education (1988). We also interviewed more than a dozen national researchers or policymakers in the general area of education and, more specifically, dropout prevention, to identify promising programs or approaches. Finally, to the extent possible, we gathered evaluation information or related research that spoke to the effectiveness of the programs that had been identified.

The programs that were reviewed are fairly broad-based--they do not necessarily fall under the strict heading of dropout prevention programs. They include interventions aimed at middle and high school students, alternative schools, and dropout reclamation programs[13]. They include programs designed to affect individuals, schools and systems. Most emanate from the educational arena, though a few are employment and training programs targeted to adolescent dropouts or dropout-prone students. They range from small-scale singly focused programs--using approaches as diverse as homework hot lines, new instructional approaches or child care for teen parents--to comprehensive multi-site interventions such as the Job Readiness program or Cities-in-Schools. At the same time, we limited our review to programs whose intent is to serve populations who appeared to be at direct risk of dropping out. Thus, we omitted special programs for gifted students, magnet schools and other similar initiatives. In addition, we made the decision at the outset of our research to set aside consideration of other school programs including special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) since including these in our review would take us too far afield from dropout prevention.

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[13]We also reviewed a number of promising interventions aimed at the primary grades or pre-schoolers such as the Perry Pre-School demonstrations, for insight into the likely effects of early prevention and intervention. These programs are not included in this chapter because our task was to focus on programs for those in fifth through twelfth grades.

This range of programs was reviewed because, to paraphrase Mann, it is hard to know exactly what is or is not a "dropout prevention" program. At its heart, dropout prevention means improving the performance of students and schools at all levels (Mann, 1986).

Although there is a substantial body of literature describing programs, the empirical data to assess their effectiveness are quite limited. The GAO (1987), in its survey of local programs, notes that "most of the surveyed programs have not been independently evaluated, and therefore, there is a lack of definitive evidence to prove what works." Rossell (1985), in her report on magnet schools, notes that "the research (in the field of effective schools) is of such poor quality that there is no reliable empirical evidence..." Manpower Development Research Corporation, in describing middle school efforts, reports that "the literature on successful middle schools points to organizational structures, school policies and practices, and values communicated by school staff to students that are consistent with the developmental needs of early adolescents. What is not available in the literature are evaluation results that demonstrate the relationship between such school characteristics and the incidence of school retention for at-risk youth" (Sherwood, 1987).

Of the myriad programs reviewed, it is unusual to find any data about outcomes such as improved attendance, performance on standardized tests, credit accumulation, promotion to the next grade, or graduation. It is even rarer to find data on any type of comparison groups.

Only a handful of programs provide convincing, valid control or comparison group data. For example, positive outcomes (relative to comparison groups) are claimed for a number of programs. However, analysis of outcomes typically fails to account for two factors. The first is self-selection or program admission policies. More motivated dropout-prone youth may opt for the program (or their parents may select it for them) or teachers may push more motivated youth into the program. Therefore, if one compares participants' results to those of non-selected applicants or all dropout-prone youth, the results will be misleading. The second factor is the failure of many programs to track all participants who ever entered the program, including those who leave. These are more than just trivial methodological concerns, since motivation and attrition within dropout prevention programs are very likely linked substantively to the outcome of interest--dropping out of school. Failure to account for these two events greatly weakens the reliability of findings.

To put the evidence in some perspective, if the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) looked at dropout prevention program-

ming with the same rigor it applied to its review of youth employment and training programs (Betsey et al., 1985) or adolescent pregnancy prevention (Hayes, 1987), only a handful of the research we reviewed would meet usual standards of evidence.[14]

The next two sections of the report describe dropout prevention or recovery programs with quantitative evidence to gauge their effect. The first presents those whose level of evidence would meet NAS standards. The second highlights a small number of programs meeting a somewhat less rigorous test, but still appear to hold substantial promise for dealing with potential high school dropouts.

We have framed our discussion according to standards of evidence as a way of organizing a very large body of literature that varies widely in quality. We thus focus on programs and approaches that have evidence about effectiveness in which policymakers can have greater confidence. We have used fairly strict criteria in deciding which programs to highlight. These include whether the programs serve at-risk youth and whether they have credible evidence on impacts including rates of graduation or other indicators of high likelihood of academic progress--increased grade progression or credit accumulation, or dramatic improvements in attendance or standardized test scores for a highly dropout-prone population.

It is impossible to uncover the full universe of promising dropout prevention efforts. In any school district, there are likely to be other promising programs that are invisible outside that district. For example, the encouraging data from the local Philadelphia Cities-in-Schools/Education for Employment Program have not been disseminated nationally. If we can point to such an example here, it is quite likely that other successful but unrecognized programs exist elsewhere.

There are also a number of programs noted in the literature (for example, three cited by Hamilton, 1986) for which descriptions of available data lead us to question its usefulness, e.g. where a comparison group was drawn from non-selected applicants. We also have not highlighted some programs described by Orr (1987), GAO (1987) or the National Dissemination

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[14]NAS required that there be a comparison group which was selected in such a way as to be relatively free of selection bias or with attempts to control statistically for such potential bias. Additionally, they required that data be based on surveys with generally accepted response rates. Educational research has generally found it difficult to meet similar standards because it operates in an environment where experimental or quasi-experimental designs are thought to be difficult to implement.

Study Group (1987) simply because we do not have sufficient evidence on their actual impact on dropping out.

PROGRAMS WITH WELL-DOCUMENTED IMPACTS

Our review suggests three programs--the Youth Entitlement Project (YIEPP), the Summer Training and Employment Program (STEP), and Job Corps--fall into this category. All three are peripheral to prevailing school delivery systems--they are embedded more in employment and training than in traditional schooling, though STEP requires cooperation of the local school district. None attempts to reform existing school structures or the delivery of education during the school year or on school premises. Thus, none provide direct examples of how to structure systemwide dropout prevention programs or strategies.

Research on these three programs does, however, advance our understanding of how to think about dropout prevention programming in a general sense by suggesting that while work experience alone has limited effects on keeping students in school, intensive and structured remediation in combination with work shows more promise. Additionally, two of the three examples--STEP and Job Corps--suggest the efficacy of alternative instructional methodologies: somewhat individualized, competency-based, computer-assisted curricula.

Findings are described briefly below:

- The Youth Entitlement project provided summer jobs and part-time employment during the school year to students who remained enrolled and made satisfactory academic progress. The program lacked any significant remedial component which was later identified by policymakers as a serious shortcoming of the project. Findings from an analysis of the project indicate that work experience alone had no impact on rates of high school graduation, though it did improve post-program earnings of participants in the short-run (Betsey et al., 1985).

- The STEP demonstration is targeted to educationally or economically disadvantaged 14- and 15-year-olds. It combines remediation and life skills with work experience during two consecutive summers and offers a modest school year support component. Preliminary findings from the demonstration (Branch et al., 1986; and Sipe et al., 1987) suggest that enriched summer programs impact on reading and math achievement over the summer, though it is not yet known if these improvements translate to improved school performance or rates of graduation.

- Job Corps is a highly structured program where students spend about half their day in basic skills instruction and half in vocational training. Most Job Corps centers are residential; some are accredited high schools, all provide GED classes, testing and access to certification. A rigorous evaluation of Job Corps did find positive effects. Findings indicate that Job Corps is at least moderately successful in improving future labor market opportunities through work experience, military service, higher education and training, better health, and geographic mobility (Mallar et al., 1982). Thus, Job Corps seems to be an effective educational recovery program for a substantial number of high school dropouts.

PROMISING DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

This section describes a small number of programs which we believe are likely to impact rates of graduation, based on available evidence. Data on them are promising, yet these data do not meet the rigorous criteria specified above.

A review of these programs leads to several conclusions. First, of all the programs considered exemplary, few of those serving middle or high school students at-risk of dropping out offered reasonable evidence that suggested they were increasing students' attachment to school. While some of this paucity of apparently effective programs results from the lack of credible research, some also reflects the intractability of the problem. Below, we describe six of the programs, two of which are in Philadelphia, that offer some reliable data.

Second, all of these programs are comprehensive, alternative programs or schools-within-schools that address simultaneously the multiple needs of youth: academic, personal and social. Less enriched models or those that focused just on a subset of students' needs tended not to document success in the broader issue of reducing dropping out or affecting the ranges of behavior, though they may have been successful in meeting their more narrow specific aim--such as to improve attendance.

Third, there is remarkable consistency in the key program features of the six programs meeting our criteria, suggesting the kernels of a generalizable program model.

Each of the six apparently effective programs are described briefly below. They are the Job Readiness Program in Chicago; the Philadelphia High School Academies; Focus; Project Coffee;

the Family Learning Center in Michigan; and Philadelphia's model of the Cities in Schools program.[15]

Job Readiness Program[16]

Job Readiness is a school-within-a-school for high school students in two Chicago schools: a vocational magnet school (Dunbar) with a more motivated student body and a comprehensive school (Farragut) whose achievement scores make it among the lowest in performance in the Chicago School District. It was designed by a consortium of businesses interested in social problems; they worked with the Chicago public schools to obtain funding from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. It is coordinated by "highly competent experienced on-site coordinators who were regular school employees before Job Readiness arrived" (Weisberg, 1987). The evaluator credits the staff with providing continuity to the program.

Job Readiness is designed to hold students in school and prepare them for work. Ninth graders are selected based on poor reading and achievement in earlier grades, and the judgment of program administrators that they will not make it in the school without additional support.

Key program components include block rostering, extra periods in basic skills, slightly smaller class size, daily counseling and job preparation courses. Parental involvement is required--parents and students must sign contracts; parents are also notified when students are absent and are involved in other ways. The business consortium provides summer jobs and other support. Jobs are used as an incentive being reserved for students who meet attendance and school performance criteria. The

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[15]Recently, there has been increased attention given to effective schools such as Garfield High School in East Los Angeles and Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School in South Carolina. It is encouraging that such schools are addressing the broad range of educational and social issues that undergird dropout issues. We do not deal with them in this report because their efforts are directed at issues that transcend student attrition. However, if these schools are are successful, they will provide strong examples of dealing with dropping out in a comprehensive manner.

[16]This description is a synthesis of program staff conference presentation and a description in Orr (1987). Program evaluation information is taken from an evaluation prepared by Alan Weisberg for PACE (1987). The composition of the comparison group is described in the evaluation report so we are unable to assess its usefulness for yielding valid comparison data.

program's evaluator attributes the program's success in part to the fact that "business involvement is deep and not superficial" (Weisberg, 1987).

The evaluation report indicates that Job Readiness students had outcomes on attendance, credits earned, course failures and GPA, that were statistically better than those of a comparison group of students at each school with similar performance histories. There were no observable differences in participants and comparison group reading scores. Math results varied by school: in the comprehensive high school, students in the program had significantly better math outcomes than did non-participating students while Job Readiness students in the magnet vocational school had significantly lower math scores than did nonparticipating vocational school students in the comparison group.

The Philadelphia High School Academies[17]

Founded as a dropout prevention initiative in 1969, with substantial support of the private sector, the Philadelphia High School Academies presently serves more than 1,200 students at 10 high schools.[18] The academies have grown substantially during the past eight years and have recently announced plans to double and eventually triple their enrollment of students. There are four vocational areas represented by academies in Philadelphia--automotive and mechanical science, electrical sciences, business, and health. The Academies are considering expanding into other vocational areas. Each program offers a combined four-year academic and vocational curriculum in a school-within-a-school setting. Most students are recruited from the bottom quartile of students taking standardized tests in the district.

The intensive program emphasizes both basic skills acquisition and job readiness. Instructors in both academic and vocational courses work as a team and are encouraged to reinforce the joint curriculum: vocational-related examples are used in academic courses; vocational teachers use situations in their applied classes to reinforce academic skills. Teachers meet regularly to assess

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[17]Additional descriptive material about the academies is presented in Chapter IV.

[18]Variations in the academy model have been implemented in several other communities with similar evidence of success (American Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, 1986).

individual student performance and develop strategies for resolving academic problems.

The academies report very low dropout rates among their students. They note, however, that some students leave an academy to reenter the regular school and then may drop out. An analysis of students entering the Business Academy in 1982 revealed an overall dropout rate of 21 percent among these students. Academy records indicate, however, that few of these students left school directly from the academy (Snyder and McMullan, 1987). The same study found that academy graduates experienced substantial success in the job market 18 months after graduation. Since graduation they had been employed or enrolled in postsecondary education for significantly longer periods than had other graduates; were more likely to be working and were nearly twice as likely to be employed in a corporation that was an official academy supporter.

The Focus Project

Focus has been identified by the National Dissemination Study Group as a successful secondary program for "disaffected" youth, based on gains on standard achievement tests, improved attendance and grades and a reduction in behaviors associated with dropping out. It has been applied in a number of school districts and grades; there is currently a Focus dissemination project which continues to replicate the program in a variety of settings.
Focus is a school-within-a-school for students exhibiting poor school performance or behaviors associated with dropping out. Students are block rostered for basic courses (English, math and social studies) and take other courses in the regular school. Students also participate in an hour of group counseling each day; groups are led by teachers.

Focus apparently considers itself both an alternative school and a model for teacher training to deal with disaffected students. The emphasis is on teaching teachers how to teach students to function more affectively by improving students' self-image and optimism about the future.

The general model has been disseminated to a number of school districts. As implemented in New York City (described in Cinal, 1982), students in Focus attend classes half the day and spend a half day in the Focus program. As in the general model, the peer/teacher counseling groups which meet an hour a day--referred to as Family--are considered a key program component. The family (or group) concept, in particular, has been fairly widely

adopted and has been cited as an important component of several different programs identified by other researchers as exemplary. Reviewers found that teacher selection was the key to the program's "success" in New York. In particular, teachers needed to have empathy with students and to be able to tolerate the frustration of dealing with a difficult student population.

Project COFFEE

Project COFFEE serves approximately 120 students in rural Massachusetts who have been identified as potential dropouts. The program has five components: occupational training, academic skills instruction, counseling, preemployment education and physical education. Students can be trained in one of five vocational areas and receive instruction. One interesting training component of the project permits students to participate in student-managed, student-operated businesses in these areas. This approach reinforces the link between schoolwork and success in a work setting.

Individual education plans are prepared for each student; the program works to integrate academic skills into the career and preemployment training. However, students take most academic courses at their regular high school and only participate in vocational and entrepreneurial skills courses in Project COFFEE. Extensive counseling is also provided as are health and parenting skills.

The program encourages students to make contracts with teachers about their objectives and tasks. Discipline problems are generally handled within the program where in-school suspensions are traditionally used.

The project reports the following evidence of its effectiveness: for several years, project participants have received higher SAT scores in all areas, testing higher than those of a comparable set of students. Second, students' attendance has shown a marked improvement over their personal attendance levels in the year prior to joining Project COFFEE. Finally, the project reports higher graduate employment placement rates than those reported nationally for dropouts. However, this last indicator is inconclusive since Project COFFEE serves primarily potential dropouts.

Family Learning Center

The Family Learning Center is cited as an example of an effective dropout prevention program targeted to girls. We include it here because the data presented suggest it

is effective and because, even though it is targeted to a particular subgroup of potential dropouts (mostly rural teenage mothers, though some teen fathers are also served), its model is remarkably consistent with broader dropout prevention approaches. It also seems quite similar to the other exemplary programs targeted at young mothers such as New Futures School in Albuquerque*[19].

Family Learning Center is designed to provide comprehensive services at a single site to teen-age parents at risk of dropping out of school. It provides access to public health and mental health services, social and legal services through county agencies, as well as continuing education and job preparation classes. Pregnant girls receive prenatal care. Child care and transportation are also provided on-site. The adolescent parents spend some supervised time with their children at the school. In addition, mental health nurses visit the teen parents in their homes. One goal of these activities is to find ways to reduce the stress of parenting in order to lessen the potential for child abuse.

Key program features include small classes, individualized schedules and counseling. Teen parents attend regular high school classes "whenever possible", although many take a substantial number of courses in the alternative setting.

According to Earle et al., (1987), 90 percent of seniors in the program are graduated, and 90 percent of seventh to eleventh graders who participate remain in school. In addition, the program reports that participants have higher GPAs and fewer pregnancy related health problems, and that their infants have higher birth weights and fewer respiratory problems.

Cities in Schools (as implemented in Philadelphia)[20]

Cities in Schools is a national model being replicated in the Philadelphia School System and elsewhere.[21] It is

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[19]Brief descriptions of programs marked with an asterisk throughout this chapter can be found in Appendix A.

[20]Information in this section comes from program descriptions and data prepared by Larry Aniloff.

[21]The Atlanta Cities in Schools program is cited as an exemplary program by Orr (1987). In Atlanta, the program operates out of a department store, providing a "comprehensive alternative

(continued...)

designed to integrate the delivery of services to students. The program attempts to coordinate a comprehensive set of services so that they can be delivered more efficiently without additional outlays of funds. According to Cities in Schools' national office, the critical components in the model are:

- commitments by important agencies and departments;
- a citywide committee;
- funding through a public/private partnership;
- city facilitation team;
- selection of school sites;
- student selection criteria;
- a service delivery plan that lays out the types of services to be coordinated through the program;
- agency/corporate agreement;
- student/parent agreements; and
- appropriate management.

The Philadelphia model is much more articulated than the national one. It calls for coordinated efforts among various named actors in the city; repositioning of personnel to provide students with access to a wide range of resources within and outside the school district; block rostering of students to facilitate monitoring their progress; numerous incentives to stay in school; and encouragement of parental involvement.

The model as it is implemented in Philadelphia has several strengths. First, it recognizes the wide array of needs of youngsters with multiple disadvantages and implements a comprehensive approach to meeting those needs. Second, the model is attractive because it does not require a substantive infusion of new funds, but rather redirects existing resources. Third, the model seems adaptable to both high school and middle schools.

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[21](...continued)
school for referred potential dropouts" known as Rich's Academy. Orr reports substantial improvements in reading and math scores on the SAT. She also indicates that 70 percent complete high school at the alternative setting, and 15 percent "return to a conventional high school or some other academic program; 15 percent have negative termination." In the absence of data from a reliable comparison group and more detailed information about the 30 percent of students who do not complete the alternative high school, it is impossible to discern the program's effect on improving the chances of student graduation.

The Philadelphia Cities in Schools project reports some data on the efficacy of the program--improvements in students' attendance and grade progression and reductions in dropping-out when contrasted with a comparison group. After carefully reviewing the mechanism for selecting the participants and comparison group, we find that these data provide promising evidence in support of the project.

Each of these programs presents some lessons about ways to design particularistic dropout prevention efforts. All of the programs seek to ameliorate some of the most pernicious effects of poverty and repeated academic failure while also addressing the immediate symptoms of dropping out. That is, they address aspects of academic achievement, the structure of schooling and conditions arising from poverty as well as any particular problems (attendance, pregnancy, alienation) that help to place students at severe risk of dropping out. While some require alternative methods of teaching, others do not. Several of the programs also incorporate part-time work and collaboration with the outside community--in particular, either parents or the private sector. Several attribute their success in part to the quality of teachers or administrators recruited to staff the program.

More importantly, the programs also share a common set of features that distinguishes them from traditional urban schools. These features include: smaller class size, a way to reduce the affective size of the school (generally by creating a school- within-a-school), institutionalized opportunities for sustained adult contact, an emphasis on basic skills and mechanisms to provide comprehensive social support services.

"EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS" WITH LIMITED RESEARCH EVIDENCE

The remaining evidence about effective programs is qualitative, based on descriptions or case studies of programs identified as "exemplary" by researchers or policy actors. This is the methodology used in the GAO's Survey of Local Programs and Orr's Keeping Students in School, two frequently cited compendiums of 'effective' dropout programs.

Included in this group are some programs for which one must rely on subjective assessments of effectiveness. The criteria used in these assessments generally do not allow one to separate programs that raise aspirations for achievement or improve rates of graduation from those that do not. For example, Wehlage (1983) measures effectiveness based on three criteria: 1) reduced student truancy; 2) increased number of credits; and 3) student and faculty testimony that the program was success-

ful.[22] The National Dissemination Study Group (1987) identifies effective programs that have been approved by the United States Department of Education's Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP). Programs are included if the panel has "examined objective evidence of effectiveness submitted by the developer of the program and are convinced that the program will meet the educational needs of others in similar locations."

Despite limitations inherent in the available information, it is still possible to draw some lessons from reviewing these programs. First, most incorporate smallness as a central feature either through smaller class size, smaller schools or some other way. Second, nearly all increase a student's likelihood of developing a relationship with an adult in the school. Some have specific mentoring components, some mandate very frequent counseling, some train teachers to more effectively relate to students. Finally, most programs apply more comprehensive approaches by offering academic components, some non-academic activities such as a job, recreational activity or group project, and attempts to meet students' social or personal needs through counseling, referral or provision of support services.

The GAO (1987), in summarizing the characteristics of 18 exemplary programs nominated by program administrators, found that "two types of intervention activities were reported by over 90 percent of the programs: personal counseling and basic education. Also common were career counseling, efforts to obtain parental involvement, assistance in obtaining social services, job search assistance, job skills training, and obtaining part-time employment."

Lotto (1982) described the common features of effective vocational education programs. He found three common characteristics: "First, each utilized a variety of strategies rather than depending on only one approach, and these strategies were well

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[22]A number of authors express concern about generalizing findings from effective schools literature, including Wehlage's work, to secondary schools. According to Stevenson (1987): "The model has been criticized for being predominantly based on research in elementary schools, and lacking transferability to the more complex organization of secondary schools (Cohen, 1983, Cuban, 1983)...Purkey and Smith, 1985 (central researchers in the effectiveness approach) apparently agree that some elements are more problematic for secondary schools, and this was confirmed in some independent research by Corcoran, 1985." However, as noted in the body of this report, the central principles that one draws from the effective schooling literature are quite consistent with the practices found in apparently effective drop-out prevention programming.

integrated. Second, all of the programs removed potential dropouts from their ordinary schools and placed them in different kinds of environments. Third, the participants constituted a small population for which resources were narrowly targeted and concentrated."

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

Despite the lack of data on effective programs, there is considerable consensus about the practices that are important in implementing dropout prevention programs. However, these programs tend to be small and to touch relatively few of the students at risk in any district. This is true in Philadelphia where, it will be noted in the following chapter, many of the common features of dropout programs are in place in one form or another in a variety of individual programs.

In an attempt to generalize from these individual practices to systemic improvement, this section presents ten principles that emerge from the literature[23]. These principles are based on our understanding of the causes of dropping out, common features of programs that seem to work and syntheses of research on particular educational issues (size, tracking, the role of work, etc.) that seem relevant to designing dropout strategies. We feel that they offer a good synthesis of the most current research findings and insights about dropout prevention. No principle emerges from a single finding or program model; each is grounded in a variety of findings and initiatives.

Our goal in generating these principles has been to peel back the outward manifestations of the program (number of contact hours, type of instruction, specific program elements) to find the intervention's essence. We seek to identify exactly what was being offered to students and teachers within the context of the programs. In consequence, we feel that we present a set of central principles that are not bound by a particular program model but rather provide a framework for addressing the dropout problem in Philadelphia.

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[23]Other authors have developed their own lists of general principles that seem to cut across effective dropout prevention programs. For example Bickel et al (1986) identified 15 characteristics of effective programs reported by Wehlage (1983) including features related to administration, teacher culture, student culture and curriculum instruction. Weber (1987) isolates similar elements as characteristic of nine exemplary vocational education programs designed to prevent at-risk youth from dropping out nominated by state departments of education.

1. Deliver education in small, intensive units with low ratios of teachers to students and many opportunities for personal contact.

While there is some controversy about the relationship between smaller class size and achievement, there is widespread consensus that smaller classes and smaller school environments are a necessary, if not sufficient, condition in delivering education to students at risk (Bennett, 1987; Wehlage, 1983; Hamilton, 1986; Bickel et al., 1987; Ascher and Flaxman, 1987; Orr, 1987; and Weber, 1987).

Class Size

The best synthesis of current research on class size is presented by the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools at the University of Wisconsin (Bennett, 1987). They found wide agreement among researchers on the following (Bennett, 1987, p. 3):

(1) Smaller classes result in increased student-teacher contact but such reductions alone do not necessarily lead to adoption of dramatically different instructional methods.

(2) Reductions in class size to fewer than 20 students without changes in instructional methods cannot guarantee improved academic achievement. (However, Glass and Smith (1979) and Riley (1986) report class size itself to be the critical variable.)

(3) No single class size is optimal for all grade levels and subjects.

(4) Smaller classes appear to result in greater achievement gains for students with lower academic ability and also for students who are economically or socially disadvantaged.

(5) Classroom management improves in smaller classes.

(6) Smaller classes result in higher teacher morale and reduced stress.

(7) Individualization is more likely to occur in smaller classes.

(8) Class size appears to have more influence on student attitudes, attention, interest, and motivation than on academic achievement.

(9) Smaller classes are beneficial for children at the primary level, particularly in math and reading.

(10) Very small classes of five or fewer students produce considerably higher achievement. (Glass and Smith (1979) report threshold effects at 10 and 20 students.)

Other researchers have noted several specific ways that small classes benefit students: smaller classes have been found to increase students' engagement with school (Barker and Gump, 1964; and Baird, 1969); and to increase the likelihood that substantial resources will be marshalled towards a few students (Bickel et al., 1987). Uninterrupted task teaching, more likely in smaller classes, has been found to increase the likelihood of higher student achievement (Rutter et al., 1979). Sizer (1984), looking at teacher load rather than class size, found that reducing teacher load improves teacher morale and increases a teacher's ability to respond to individual students. One would expect similar results for smaller classes.

Most of the apparently effective dropout programs reviewed also report smaller class size. Some have as few as eight students per teacher. More typically, fifteen students per teacher are reported. A few programs, such as the Family Learning Center, incorporated smaller class size into the program model by design; others, such as Job Readiness, found it to be a welcome by-product of being a smaller school within a school.

A number of policymakers call for reducing class size in early grades to increase teachers' ability to impart core reading and computational skills (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988). Such a policy speaks directly to dropout prevention because of the probable link noted in the last chapter between poor reading achievement and the risk of dropping out of school. Other authors believe that smaller classes improve the quality of teacher/student interaction (Bennett, 1987).

School Size

The benefits of smallness apparently extend to schools as well as classes. School size has been shown to be direct-

ly related to dropout rates (Hess and Lauber, 1985). According to Hess and Lauber, research evidence supports the view that "academically and socially marginal students are most vulnerable to the hazards of large schools". Establishing an affective smaller school, either through an alternative setting from the large, anonymous comprehensive high school or by establishing schools within schools is a common feature of almost all successful dropout prevention programs and is one of the core recommendations of the recently released report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1988). That report cites a number of examples of smaller high schools or schools within schools, some using house plans (Orr High School in Chicago, Theodore Roosevelt High School in the Bronx), though without evidence on whether the policy has been successful in reducing dropout rates.

The main benefits of smaller schools are thought to be the increased ability to monitor student progress (Cities in Schools, Philadelphia Academies, SOAR*), increased opportunities for students and teachers to interact formally and informally and to permit greater responsiveness to students (Diversified Educational Experiences Program (Project DEEP)*, Focus, Cities in Schools, Philadelphia Academies) and creation of a feeling of belonging and hence less stressful transitions for adolescents entering multi-class school settings (Feldner, 1982).

Few argue that smallness of itself is sufficient to improve education, particularly in the absence of effective instruction. And one could not make that claim empirically because there are very few programs that varied class or school size without also changing other variables likely to affect outcomes; i.e., modes of instruction, rostering procedures, counseling or services provided. However, the evidence strongly suggests that reducing the size of the educational delivery unit--whether class size or the size of the affective school--is a powerful tool to improve the likelihood that students will be better served.

2. Develop high teacher expectations, reinforce student self-worth, set clear standards and hold students to them.

A number of authors posit that traditional schooling, intentionally or unintentionally, creates lower expectations for some students than it does for others. This was most recently confirmed in (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988) An Imperiled Generation, Saving Urban Schools, which states "28 percent of all teachers in urban schools agree with the statement that schools cannot expect to graduate more than 75% of their students."

Common sense suggests that low expectations by teachers and schools for students can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Evidence about tracking (reported in a later section of this chapter) supports this notion. In response, a number of authors suggest that teachers must develop higher expectations for all students (especially for students at risk including those who are economically and culturally disadvantaged and those for whom traditional teaching approaches are ineffective) and must hold themselves and the students accountable for meeting those standards (Wehlage, 1983; Ochoa et al., 1987; Rutter, 1987; United States Department of Education, 1987; Hamilton, 1986; Weber, 1987; and Comer, 1980).

Public Schools of Choice*, described in the National Dissemination Study Group (1987), was designed explicitly to raise teachers' and students' expectations about their ability to perform well in school. It is credited with "improving students' reading skills and attitudes towards school." Public Schools of Choice is an alternative high school with an emphasis on individualization, peer counseling, teacher interaction and cooperation. It has eliminated formal grades in favor of written descriptions of students' progress.

3. Use of a wide range of instructional techniques, including individualized approaches. Use state-of-the-art instructional methods (i.e., cooperative learning, computer-assisted instruction, mastery learning approaches) to upgrade the general quality of instruction and reach individual students.

Implicit in many of the principles outlined in this report is that changing the structure of schooling will facilitate improvements in the way material is taught. However, as the research on small class size indicates, structural changes alone are not necessarily enough to produce desired effects--increased achievement or attachment to school, for example. Thus, these structural changes are a necessary but not sufficient condition for school reform.

Several authors suggest that explicit attention to method and type of instruction is necessary, particularly for students who have already failed grades where courses were taught using traditional methods (Wehlage, 1983; U.S. Department of Education, 1987; Natriello et al., 1986; and Hamilton, 1986). They typically stress the need for teachers to have a range of instructional options that can be applied to particular students and situations: "greater individualization of curricular and instructional strategies that involve the tailoring of course content and the method and pace of instruction to individual students results in more responsive learning conditions for all students" (Natriello et al., 1986).

This report is not intended to catalogue all of the possible instructional approaches that could be used. However, several are consistently mentioned in the literature as having particular application for high-risk students, including cooperative learning, more individualized, competency-based instruction, computer-assisted instruction, and mastery learning.

Cooperative learning is "a method of instruction in which small groups of students of all performance levels work together toward a group goal. Students are responsible for their groupmates' learning as well as their own" (Earle et al., 1987). Developed at Johns Hopkins University, the technique is being disseminated through the Johns Hopkins Learning Project, in part through Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) projects. "A review of the research on cooperative learning on academic achievement found in grades 7-12 found that in 25 of 37 studies (68%) cooperative learning was found to produce better results than traditional instructional methods" (Newmann, 1987). Proponents of cooperative learning say that it is an effective teaching tool for girls because it rewards cooperation rather than competition (Earle et al., 1987), and that it can be useful in getting academic help to minority males who may be reluctant to admit academic weakness outside a small group setting.

Computer-assisted instruction is used in a number of dropout prevention and recovery programs, including STEP and Job Corps, to facilitate time on task in intensive remediation settings. It is thought to vastly increase motivation and attention. Proponents of Comprehensive Competencies Program (CCP)[24], one widely used example of competency-based computer-assisted instruction, also point to reading and math gains, though these gains have not received much scrutiny using rigorous statistical analytic techniques.

More individualized, competency-based instructional methods bear promise as well. The curriculum is broken up into tiny bits. After diagnostic testing has occurred, youth progress at

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[24]"CCP is a nationally distributed competency-based instructional program developed by Remediation and Training Institute in Washington, D.C. It is a self-paced instruction system based on sequenced workbooks and computer software. With this system, students can prepare for the GED, improve basic skills and achieve competency in various areas of job readiness and occupational interest. Instruction is hierarchically organized toward specific learning objectives. Corresponding tests assess students' mastery of each objective, providing feedback and pinpointing problem areas. A critical component of the program is an automated management system that tracks individual students' progress" (Orr, 1987:129).

their own pace, tackling competencies. Students' progress is measured against their original starting point. As competencies are learned, students can perceive some success, and additional competencies are tackled. This type of instructional methodology is used by the Job Corps, STEP, Philadelphia's Franklin Learning Center and at other sites as well.

Several dropout prevention programs (including Job Corps and STEP) center specifically on the use of alternative instruction strategies. For example, Project DEEP, cited by the National Dissemination Study Group as an alternative teaching strategy for potential dropouts in grades 9 through 12, gives teachers training in alternative ways to organize classrooms, present and display materials and advise students. According to the network, the classroom environment is casual, open, trusting and task-oriented. Classes are highly structured, but in workshop rather than classroom fashion. The approach uses electronic as well as more traditional learning tools.

4. Meet the broad range of needs of youth with multiple disadvantages or risk factors. Integrate remediation with components to meet health and social service needs. Develop holistic, comprehensive programs combining social and academic activities.

Researchers in the area of dropout prevention consistently call for programs that treat the whole student, by which they mean providing for the social, emotional and survival needs of students while also addressing their academic needs (Lotto, 1982; Bickel et al., 1987; Hahn and Danzberger, 1987; Weber, 1987; and Orr, 1987). Comprehensive programming is consistent with the causal literature, which suggests that at-risk youth have a broad range of needs that schools must address to ensure that learning can take place.

A number of programs described in the literature already embody this principle. For example, the GAO (1987), in its review of urban dropout prevention efforts notes that 'exemplary' programs "customarily provide multiple services, with most youth at risk receiving some type of basic education, counseling and social service assistance". As noted earlier, it is also a common feature of the six apparently effective programs described in this report. While each provides remediation or basic skills instruction, each also has a specific method to deliver social support and other services to students. For example, the Family Learning Center brings social workers, mental health and public health workers into the learning site.

Health and other non-academic services can themselves be the focus of dropout prevention programming. The Adolescent Primary Health Care Clinic*, reviewed by Orr, uses its medical and counseling teams to identify youth at risk, and then

enrolls them in one of several dropout prevention programs associated with the clinic. However, the outcome of this strategy has not been determined. One component of the Comprehensive Services for Pregnant and Parenting Students (CSPPS) is designed specifically for teenage parents who have left school. The program seeks to work with students to prepare for the GED examination or re-enter a regular high school setting.

5. Incorporate sustained adult contact into programs. The first option is to have this sustained contact be with teachers. Other options are to use counselors, community workers, parents and business people.

Nationally, educators are recognizing that strong links with adults are an important component for helping at-risk youth: "Overcoming anonymity--creating a setting in which every student is known personally by an adult--is one of the most compelling obligations urban schools confront" (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988).

Many programs have tried to foster relationships between adults and students as a tool to break down anonymity, to increase student attachment and belongingness, and to provide the necessary emotional support and source of referrals from which poor urban youth can benefit. The central role of the counselor in the "I Have a Dream" project and the counselor/ombudsman in several Cities in Schools projects are examples.

There are a number of ways of effecting sustained adult contact. Options include smaller class sizes combined with block rostering; teacher assignment to a house unit over a period of time; or assignment of an ombudsman/counselor or social support team to youth.

6. Establish purposive partnerships with the outside community (parents, community organizations, private sector, colleges and universities and social service deliverers) as a way to expand resources available to the school, to build a broader constituency for public education, to empower parents and the community and to create access to opportunities (jobs, postsecondary schooling) beyond the schools.

Partnerships with the community can be an important source of educational resources--equipment, funds, personnel, volunteers--and political and community support for public education (Cippolone, 1986; Levin, 1985). Numerous researchers have called for schools to actively pursue ways to involve the community in education and develop this involvement as a cornerstone of public school effectiveness (e.g., see the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988; and

McMullan and Snyder, 1987). For example, in reviewing dropout prevention programs aimed at girls, one author noted that "Effective programs involve collaboration and coordination among government agencies, community organizations, the home and the business community" (Earle et al., 1987). Comer (1980) makes a compelling argument for such involvement: "The critical prerequisite for success, however, is that decision making be shared willingly, not on a token basis,...many highly competent parents can be threatened by school staff...many staff are wary or apprehensive about parent participation...The implication is that nobody can simply invite or mandate parent participation and expect it to be sustained."

The forms of community involvement can vary widely. Programs can be designed that link virtually all sectors of the community--parent, local community-based organizations, social service delivery organizations, government agencies, private businesses and area colleges and universities--with the schools. No single unified model appears to be needed but coordination of the linkages should be maintained to reduce conflict and duplication of effort. Examples of the wide range of collaborations can be found throughout the nation. Adopt-a-school programs linking schools with corporations are common in many communities (McMullan and Snyder, 1987; McNett, 1982; Zacchei et al., 1986); individual volunteer programs are also common (National School Volunteer Program); parental involvement initiatives have met with sporadic success in some communities but are difficult to implement and sustain; college and university linkages with schools have recently begun to address the problems of at-risk youth. Examples of the variety of such partnerships include the higher education component of the Boston Compact; the City University of New York/New York City Board of Education Collaborations; and Atlanta's Distinguished Scholars/Humanities Program. Many collaborations already exist in Philadelphia including corporate adopt-a-school programs, close links between Temple University and surrounding public schools and programs designed to engage parents directly in the schooling of their children.

7. Build in incentives, such as jobs, to attend and perform well in school.

Tangible incentives may be a key feature of dropout prevention programming or merely a small part. Incentives noted in the literature include the promise of paid college tuition (I Have a Dream initiative; Boston's ACCESS and similar scholarship programs); work opportunities (for example, Job Readiness and programs described in McMullan et al., 1987); recreational/social opportunities (Cities in Schools); and blazers, t-shirts, awards and other tangible recognitions of success (Job Corps, Philadelphia High School Academies).

No experimental work has been done that can pinpoint incentives as the critical component of dropout prevention programming, though quite substantial incentives, such as the promise of college tuition or a job, are obviously important in some efforts (e.g. I Have A Dream Foundation programs). Some recent research does point to the efficacy of work as an incentive to keep students in school. For example, the Job Readiness program explicitly rewards students who are making satisfactory progress and have very good attendance (perfect attendance in the senior year) with private sector summer jobs.[25]

Such large scale initiatives are more easily developed system-wide with a citywide initiative, such as the Boston Compact and the Cleveland program begun in 1987 that establishes scholarship accounts for students based on their course grades, or substantial private sector involvement, as in I Have a Dream and Job Readiness programs.

However, other types of incentives can be obtained inexpensively. Small incidental incentives, such as vouchers for sports events, fast food restaurants or rock concerts, can usually be donated. Summer jobs can often be coordinated through the Private Industry Council or other youth employment and training programs. These kinds of incentives should be considered since they are relatively easy to acquire and may make a difference.

8. <u>Remove barriers to attending school: provide as necessary child care, income-producing opportunities (work-study and part-time jobs), flexible hours, transportation, etc.</u>

Program operators appear to have identified several obstructions to students staying in school that are relatively easily overcome given sufficient resources. Chief among these barriers are lack of adequate child care for the children of teen

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[25]While there has been some concern that working might have perverse effects--it might encourage students at risk to leave school--recent evidence suggests this is not the case. Using NLS data collected from 1979 through 1982, D'Amico (1984) found that minority females, white females and white males in most grades who worked 1 to 20 hours a week were less likely to drop out of school than those who did not work at all. However, white female juniors and white male sophomores who worked 20 or more hours per week were more likely to drop out of school. These findings have generally been interpreted to mean that part-time work (of 20 hours a week or less) is helpful in holding students in school; but more intensive work is detrimental. However, D'Amico (1984) points out that cause and effect is not so clear-cut, since students who have already decided to drop out may increase their hours of work as a kind of "pre-dropping out" behavior.

parents and competition between the need to earn money and the need to finish one's schooling.

The lesson one draws from a review of national programs is that the best way to address these barriers is by structuring schools to fit the students, rather than the reverse. Hill and Bragg (1985) report that day care appears to help hold students in school. Several of the programs we reviewed provided day care on-site to students as one of several program components. For example, the Family Learning Center, described earlier, provides child care and parenting services on-site. Similarly, the New Futures School in Albuquerque, a special school for pregnant and parenting teens, provides child care and counseling to the families of teen parents along with educational and support services to the teenagers themselves. According to Ascher and Flaxman (1987), "an overwhelming number of (New Futures) students remain in school, have healthy babies, and do not become pregnant again in their first postpartum year". The Murray-Wright High School Day Care Center*, described by Orr, provides similar services, though outcomes are not documented.

For some students at risk of dropping out, the need to earn income is just as pressing. Schools have traditionally found ways--such as distributive education--for certain students to fit working into the school schedule. Some researchers call for schools to maintain more flexible schedules (Troob, 1979) so that youth can finish school and support themselves and their families simultaneously.

9. Change policies having unintended or perverse effects: methods of accounting for student enrollment, suspension, grade retention, withdrawal, teacher assignment, etc.

There are a number of particular policies of public schools that researchers believe contribute to students' dropping out (GAO, 1987; Hahn and Danzberger, 1987; Ascher and Flaxman, 1987; Fine, 1986 and 1987; Natriello et al., 1986). The general notion is that such policies 'push' students out of school--that is, the policy has the effect, intended or not, of making it harder rather than easier for a student to complete school.

Specific policies that have been mentioned in the literature, and programs designed to address them include:

- Suspension policies that temporarily remove students from school as punishment for poor attendance or unacceptable behavior. The literature indicates that being suspended is associated with dropping out of school, although, as noted earlier, it is probably more correct to think of suspension as a symptom

rather than a cause of early school leaving. To the extent that suspension of itself is harmful, it is likely to foster dropping out for two reasons: 1) students who are suspended generally have no mechanism to make up the work they have missed and 2) being suspended gives students a taste of life outside the school that may be attractive.

A number of schools have developed alternatives to out-of-school suspensions, although their effectiveness is not well documented. Several districts (Memphis, Dallas, Portland, Dade and Duval public schools) have developed in-school suspension programs. Components may include conferences, time-out centers in which students spend some class periods, in-school suspension or truancy centers, intensive counseling and strategies to involve parents and communities. Memphis operates a three- to nine-week program targeted to students who are candidates for expulsion. Dallas has off-campus School Community Guidance Centers for 'incorrigible students' designed to help them increase their coping and academic skills. Philadelphia also has adopted some in-school suspension programs in its middle schools and senior high schools. In addition, the Alternative Placement Center and Shallcross School, described in the next chapter, work with students with behavioral and attendance problems to develop better coping skills.

- Tracking: the neutral view of tracking is that it facilitates teaching by grouping together students with like interests or academic backgrounds. However, there is increasing evidence students are tracked for reasons other than interest or ability, e.g. "Black males are most apt to be placed in general track classes, fail courses, and be suspended because they are perceived to have poor social skills" (Howe and Edelman, 1985).

  There is also evidence that tracking is harmful in and of itself. The National Center on Effective Secondary Schools (Gamoran and Berends, 1987) summarized research on stratification and found that "college-track students are likely to attain more schooling than students in other tracks with <u>otherwise equivalent high school records</u>" (in other words, net of ability). The Center also reports that "tracking sets in motion a vicious cycle: based on stereotypes and on past experience, teachers hold low expectations for low-track students; perceiving these views, students hold lower expectations for

themselves and further reduce the expectations held by teachers." The negative attitude of low-track students may be attributable to the track itself (California Assembly Office of Research, 1986; and Oakes, 1985). These conclusions are echoed by other researchers also.

According to the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, a summary of studies indicates that instruction for low-track students differs from higher track instruction along the following dimensions: the material is conceptually simplified and taught more slowly; there is more reliance on memorization than analysis; and teachers omit topics. The Center argues that the sum total of this approach is to offer low-track students "low-status knowledge unlike the knowledge required for college entrance exams", effectively reinforcing students' recognition of differential payoffs for equivalent years of schooling. There is also a general perception that students in lower tracks get the weakest teachers. Gamoran and Berends (1987) report that teachers assigned to lower tracks actually decrease in teaching effectiveness, not, as was formerly supposed, that the best teachers tended to avoid the lowest tracks.

- Attendance policies may have unintended negative effects. For example, penalties for cutting classes cannot be greater than penalties for skipping an entire school day, because such penalties encourage students to skip school.

- Grade retention/promotion policies. Some (Levin, 1985; Combs and Cooley, 1968) argue that stricter standards have unanticipated debilitating effects on disadvantaged youth. While it is not clear that retention in grade has a net effect on staying in school if achievement is held constant, the literature is clear that policies governing promotion and retention must be accompanied by complementary policies that foster academic remediation for students who are retained. Such a conclusion is supported by data on DNMCs in the Philadelphia School System reported earlier.

- Teacher attendance/transfer policies. There is some evidence that having high teacher turnover in the classroom has a negative effect on student achievement. In response, some researchers have called for a reassessment of the extent to which teachers should be allowed to transfer mid-year, and to attendance

policies that lead to excessive use of substitute teachers (Ascher and Flaxman, 1987).

10. Identify at-risk youth early--both early in their school careers and as early as they manifest signs of poor performance.

Even assuming that schools adopted all of the broader changes implicit in the principles stated above, some students would likely need additional help to succeed. The causal model presented in the previous chapter suggests that, because dropping out is a developmental process, there is no one best place to intervene. However, the literature on preschool programs, compensatory education, and research reported by the Committee for Economic Development (1987) indicate that preschool and intervention in early grades can mitigate some, but not all, of the effects of poverty by ensuring that children do not enter school language deficient. Further, a few programs aimed at intervening with students at the start of their high school careers show promise of interrupting the cycle of poor performance and adolescent stresses that exacerbate their risk of leaving (Job Readiness, FOCUS). And there is considerable evidence (e.g., the association between being retained or being overage in grade with dropping out) that identifying students for help after they have already failed comes too late for a large proportion of students (Troob, 1979).

Thus, available evidence as well as common sense suggests that schools need systems of sufficient sensitivity to track student performance and identify students needing extra support as early as possible. Key school performance indicators that have been identified in the literature are reading behind grade level, poor attendance, failure to accumulate credits, and being retained in grade. Other indicators include taking on adult roles too soon (pregnancy) or extremely stressful home conditions (for example, high mobility because of homelessness, extreme poverty or, for Hispanics, constant movement between one's homeland and another city). These indicators can occur at any time in a student's career, arguing for continual monitoring.[26]

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[26]A number of researchers and policy actors have called for schools to develop computerized management information systems able to track the progress of individual students and schools; several have noted that an important by-product of such data would be the ability to measure school performance and hold schools accountable (Cooley and Bickel, 1986; Hahn and Danzberger, 1987; and Mann, 1986). Some recommend that the system enable districts to track cohorts of students, in and out of the system, to get a

(continued...)

CONCLUSION

These ten principles synthesize our understanding of the link between causes of dropping out, research on effective schools and practices of apparently successful programs. Each could be an element of a new dropout prevention strategy. Their strength, however, lies in their combined prescription for developing broader, systemwide changes that would make schools more hospitable to all students, not just those at-risk.

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[26](...continued)
truer picture of how well students are served and to identify particular areas to be addressed (Ascher and Flaxman, 1987).

IV. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS IN PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia public schools have developed a variety of interventions to serve students at risk of dropping out. Many are recognized as national models for programs that serve at-risk youth. In addition, Philadelphia public schools have a tradition of alternative schools and approaches to educating students with special interests and abilities. This chapter briefly reviews a variety of these programs and approaches, using them as examples of how the central principles of dropout prevention and academic improvement have been implemented in some Philadelphia schools already.

Within a school district as large as Philadelphia Public Schools, it is not surprising to find scores of special programs and initiatives designed to meet the myriad needs of students. At the beginning of this project, approximately 25 programs were nominated by key school district officials as examples of dropout prevention initiatives in Philadelphia or programs that offered models for delivering instruction in alternative settings within the district. The programs identified were not intended to be an exhaustive list and were almost exclusively comprised of individual programs and with only few exceptions did not include entire schools. That there were so many programs from which to choose reflects a willingness to experiment with new approaches. Such openness is essential, we believe, for instituting a comprehensive dropout prevention initiative.

This chapter begins by briefly describing ten initiatives selected because they represent strong or illustrative examples of existing Philadelphia dropout programs or alternative schools. For convenience, program descriptions are divided into three groups:

- o programs specifically developed as dropout prevention initiatives
  - Philadelphia High School Academies
  - Cities in Schools
  - Douglas-Carroll Alternative School
  - Jones-Stetson Alternative Middle School
- o programs designed for special at-risk populations whose situation make them likely candidates for dropping out
  - Alternative Placement Center
  - Shallcross

- Comprehensive Services for Pregnant and Parenting Students

o alternative programs offering examples of different approaches for dealing with students

- Parkway Program
- Franklin Learning Center
- Motivation Program

Because of their particular relevance, the dropout prevention initiatives are described more fully than are the other more well-known alternative programs. After reviewing these ten programs, we use them to elucidate how the principles described in the previous chapter have been implemented in some instances in Philadelphia.

DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Philadelphia public schools have developed a number of dropout prevention initiatives in recent years. We describe four examples here: The Philadelphia High School Academies, Cities in Schools, Douglas-Carroll Alternative School and Jones-Stetson Alternative Middle School. The first two initiatives are multi-site, moderate-sized programs operating within regular schools. The other two programs are smaller, single-site projects functioning in separate facilities.

The Philadelphia High School Academies

The Academies are four-year (grades 9 to 12) vocational programs that serve approximately 1,400 potentially at-risk students[27] by linking academic skills, vocational training and the prospect of employment for graduates. Academy students are offered integrated academic and vocational curricula in one of four vocational areas--automotive and mechanical sciences, applied electrical science, business and health. Academy programs are located as schools-within-schools in 10 comprehensive high schools and serve approximately 120-150 students at each site. Students are block-rostered for all academic and

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[27]The Academies set as their target population, students who on the basis of performance in courses and on standardized tests are not in the upper half of their classes. A recent assessment of the Academies reports that "Academy records indicate that 73 percent of Academy students tested below the 25th national percentile in the California Achievement Tests (CAT) in either reading comprehension or mathematical skills. Thirty-five percent tested below the 25th national percentile in both reading comprehension and math skills" (Snyder and McMullan, 1987, p. 2).

vocational courses. Academy curriculum demands require that students attend school for an eight period day, even in those schools where most other students are enrolled for only seven periods. Classroom work is supplemented in the upper grades by after-school and summer work experience with business supporters of the Academies.

The program at each site is headed by a lead teacher who works with a team of teachers exclusively assigned to the Academy. Teachers generally share a common free period in which curricula matters and individual student performances are reviewed. Academies report high average daily attendance, low student dropout rates and high-post graduation employment rates. Snyder and McMullan (1987) report that an analysis of students entering the Business Academy in 1982 found a graduation rate of 77 percent and a dropout rate of 21 percent (though they caution that changes in the Academy model since 1982 may affect future rates). In the same report, Business Academy graduates were reported to be as successful as two comparison groups of students in terms of employment and entry into postsecondary education within 18 months of graduation, not controlling for academic performance before entering the program. That is, Academies graduates, despite generally being recruited from the lowest quartiles in CAT scores, achieve the same levels of employment and postsecondary education experienced by other graduates whose test performance was believed superior.

The Academies receives substantial support from the school district and the business community. The school district contributes about 1.5 times the normal student allocation for students enrolled in the program. For its part, the private sector awards grants to underwrite individual academy sites, provides part-time jobs, donates equipment and materials and gives release time to employees to work on Academy projects. Each vocational Academy has an independent support staff comprised of an executive director, job developers, other staff and an active board of directors who work with teachers and students.

As a strong example of a school/business collaboration, the Academies yield two significant benefits from this partnership. First, it provides students with evidence of the link between academic performance and future success. Second, involving the broader community representatives in schools gives them first-hand knowledge of many of the issues facing urban public education (McMullan et al., 1987).

Cities-In-Schools Program (CIS)

Cities-In-Schools is a national model for integrated community services into public schools. The program exists in many urban

areas and is adapted in each city to meet the particular students' and schools' needs and infrastructure of community support and services that can be leveraged. In Philadelphia, Cities-In-Schools was initiated in a single school in 1985, and has expanded steadily in the district with new funding from the state, local foundations and other sources. The program is an effort jointly supported by the school district, government agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) to meet the needs of a targeted group of at-risk students with the aim of improving their graduation rates. In 1986/87 CIS operated in 7 sites. By the 1987/88 school year there were 10 CIS programs; 7 in high schools (where CIS was linked to Education for Employment Initiative, an employment preparation program that seeks to increase employment opportunities for students and assist them in the school to work transition) and three in middle schools.

The CIS model offers intensive student contact with teachers and a broad system of services and support to resolve students' academic and social problems. It makes a substantial attempt to draw upon existing services and programs to assist its students. Among the program's key characteristics are block rostering students to a core of common classes, close monitoring of student performance, broad and frequent use of rewards for achievement and performance, regular contact with parents about student progress, and pre-employment training and placement services for summer jobs. The broad CIS model is flexible enough to allow substantial differences in implementation across schools. In particular, the implementation varies substantially between high schools and middle schools.

The approach used at Cooke Junior High is instructive because it shows how the model can be used very intensively to serve a severely 'at-risk' population. The Cooke CIS program serves 40 8th grade students who had failed to pass the 7th grade over two consecutive years. Thus, it is entirely comprised of DNMC students.

At Cooke, all CIS students are assigned to a common classroom for the majority of the school day. They leave the room only for Chapter I pullout remediation and auxiliary courses. CIS classes are team taught by two teachers who jointly teach all academic courses. The two teachers are award winning instructors who are highly enthusiastic about working with these students. Teachers use a variety of incentives to reward students for improvement in academic performance (testing, homework, attendance, punctuality) including letters to parents and passes to cultural and sporting events. The teachers are

strongly supported by their school principal[28] and the CIS coordinator who works with the business community and other organizations to obtain access to additional resources.

At the high schools, CIS programs offer a similar range of services and provide after-school preemployment training and eventual placement for "job ready" students. CIS assigns a coordinator to each high school to monitor student performance and assist CIS students to obtain employment. The coordinator serves as an ombudsman to resolve problems at the job or in school, and obtains additional resources for students who need them.

The program reports substantial improvements in average daily attendance, reduced dropout rates and higher promotion rates among CIS students in comparison with other students in the same schools. Specifically, CIS reports an annual dropout rate of 10 percent in the four high schools in which data were available in comparison with an annual average school rate of 17 percent for the whole district. At two high schools, no students had dropped out from CIS. CIS students experienced an average promotion rate of 81% in the seven schools for which data were available in comparison with an overall promotion rate of 60 percent in the host junior and senior high schools. CIS reports that a substantial number of its students received "double promotions" as a result of the work they had completed.

Douglas-Carroll Alternative Program

The Douglas-Carroll Alternative Program is a recovery project for students, overwhelmed by the size of the regular comprehensive high schools or uncomfortable dealing with large numbers of students of other races, dropped out. The Douglas-Carroll program evolved from two former dropout prevention initiatives begun in the 1970s to serve students at Kensington High School and Edison High School. Each had been located in facilities away from their home high schools; one in space rented by the district and the other in a closed elementary school. A combination of factors including a decision by the district to reduce the amount of properties it leased and new federal and state regulations over maintaining separate facilities for special education students caused the district to merge the two programs and place it at a school that had exclusively served special education students.

The program's capacity is 300, but it is usually under-enrolled due to high levels of turnover and difficulty in recruiting

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[28]Since only 40 students are assigned to a class with two full-time teachers, there is a student/teacher ratio of 20:1, lower than in other parts of the school.

students to return to school. Approximately 120 students are enrolled in the program in the 9th and 10th grade and approximately 100 in the 11th and 12th grade. Students in 9th and 10th grade attend classes at Douglas School where they share the facility with special education students. Upon completion of 10th grade, students transfer to the Carroll school for 11th and 12th grades. In these later two years students are jointly assigned to the Swenson or Randolph skills centers for vocational training on a alternating weekly basis.

Program staff describe the program as a refuge for students who were having difficulty coping in the traditional school environment. Many students have failed one or more grades (the average age of 9th graders is 16), had some discipline problems or had difficulty with other students in the schools before dropping out. As an off-site program, Douglas-Carroll allows students to have a new start in a smaller, more flexible environment. As a dropout recovery program, Douglas-Carroll does not limit the number of times a student may enter the program after dropping out. "This can be a tenth-chance program," the coordinator noted.

The program attempts to provide a long-term supportive setting for students. For example, the Douglas part of the program has seven teachers, an aide and a coordinator thus providing a much higher ratio of students to adults than in regular high schools. Students are taught by the same teacher for the two consecutive years. Students have all class periods except gym and lunch on the same floor. Attendance letters are sent home each month; parents are called daily if students do not attend. The coordinator serves as an ombudsmen, administering discipline, working on rostering and making referrals to other programs for students whose performance indicates that they can be better served elsewhere. At the Carroll program, students attend the skills center classes with more regularity than they do the academic classes at Carroll.

Overall, program staff admit that they only meet some of the needs of the students and rarely are able to turn around student performance and behavior. Average daily attendance is about 52 percent. Although the program has attempted to offer a variety of incentives and rewards to boost attendance and improve achievement, the coordinator noted that few seemed to work effectively. Although parents are asked to support the program, few actually do. Teachers commented that the students who attend this program do so because they themselves desire it, and not because of parental involvement.

Program staff believe that two factors in students' lives compete with involvement in the program. First, students have gravitated to minimum-wage jobs in the area. Second, many female students have children but lack child care options to

allow them to attend school. Douglas-Carroll has no child care center.

No comprehensive assessment of the program has been undertaken. The program reports that it graduates approximately 35 to 40 seniors annually. However, the high turnover of students within the program makes it difficult to interpret this graduation rate. In addition, comparisons are very difficult because of the special nature of the population served. In contrast to the majority of programs in Philadelphia, Douglas-Carroll is one of the few which deals with students who have already left school.

Jones/Stetson Alternative Middle School

Jones/Stetson began 15 years ago as an alternative school for approximately 90 ninth graders having difficulty making the transition to high school. It operates in a converted factory office building several blocks from the home schools of its students. For its first three years, the initiative was supported by federal funds. In the ensuing years the program has changed its focus from ninth graders to seventh and eighth graders and has increased its enrollment. At present, the program serves approximately 260 students about half of whom come from Jones Middle School and the remainder from Stetson Middle School. Each home school provides five teachers to the program and also a part-time counselor whose duties are divided between the regular schools and the alternative program. Teacher and counselor salaries are paid from the home school budgets. The school district supports directly only the cost of administration of the program.

Students are referred to the program principally because of poor attendance though some students are placed in the program because of disciplinary problems. Generally, students are 2 to 3 years overage. At present, only two of the 260 students are "on grade" for their age. The coordinator and teachers note that dealing with an entire school comprised of grade repeaters can be a problem because there are no successful peer role models within the school.

Students take classes in the five major subjects only. No minor subjects are offered and the school day ends directly after lunch. The rates of passing courses are poor within the school. The coordinator notes that while students who had been referred due to absences reduce their truancy substantially while at the school, many still are absent 60 days or more per year. With such high levels of absence, it is virtually impossible for students to complete the work needed to be advanced to the next grade. Ironically, on standardized tests, program students perform better than average but their poor attendance (and consequent lack of school work for which they

receive credit) ensures that they cannot pass. Some students have been in the program for 4 years and have not passed to the next grade.

There are a number of instructive anomalies at Jones-Stetson. First, since faculty are in reality assigned to one of the home schools that send students to the program, their assignment to the program is at the discretion of the home school principal. One principal solicits volunteers to teach at the program and selects among those who volunteer. The other home school principal assigns teachers to the program on the basis of lowest seniority at the school. As a result, there are often substantial motivational and experience differences among the faculty.

Second, the program has, at some times, endeavored to get parents involved but with unsatisfactory results. The coordinator and teachers report that often students' parents are shouldering a number of pressures and personal problems that may be greater than those of their children.

Third, 90 percent of the students in the program qualify for some assistance under the school lunch program; however, despite the likelihood that many of these students would also qualify for Chapter I support services, none receive them since these services are administered at the home school building only. Originally established as an alternative program with a variety of special supports and services, Jones-Stetson's program has slowly been whittled down with changing budget priorities and other pressures. For example, the program had a cadre of aides when it first began but when the federal funding for the original implementation ended, some of these positions were cut and now only 1 aide serves the entire school.

No recent evaluation of the program has been undertaken. When the program was receiving federal support some analyses were conducted to meet reporting requirements.

PROGRAMS AIMED AT SPECIAL AT-RISK POPULATIONS

Philadelphia has a number of programs designed expressly to serve special populations of students who, for a variety of reasons, have been removed from the traditional school setting or whose circumstances make them difficult to serve in regular schools. These programs are distinguished by those described above because they may draw students from the entire district to address a particular problem or condition--truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy. Although these problems or conditions may be associated with dropping out, the focus of these programs is primarily on the particular problem or condition and secondarily on dropout prevention. The structure and approach of these programs provide insights on meeting the

needs of students facing often acute problems. In this section, we very briefly describe three programs[29] targeted at particular types of students: Alternative Placement Center, a center for students exhibiting disruptive and anti-social behavior; Shallcross which enrolls students with substantial truancy; and, Comprehensive Services for School Age Parents that seeks to meet the educational needs of pregnant and parenting students. Each has important lessons for serving at-risk youth.

Alternative Placement Center (APC)

APC is a diagnostic and behavioral rehabilitation center for approximately 45 students whose behaviors in traditional school settings were deemed disruptive or threatening to teachers and other students. The program uses an intensive approach of very small classes, ongoing academic skill and behavior assessment, low student/counselor ratios and regular application of rewards for improved performance to help students learn appropriate school behaviors and master academic material.

Besides the administrator, the program has five teachers, four aides, two full-time counselors, a mental health department service representative and a youth psychiatrist on contract with the school district. Upon entry into the program students' academic skills are assessed and an individualized education plan based on the standardized curriculum is prepared. Dysfunctional student behaviors are identified and through counseling and work with teachers students are encouraged to find ways to change them. Students are generally assigned to the APC for 60 to 90 days. After the 20th day in the program, the administrator receives a report from each of the student's teachers and counselors that describes their academic performance, behavior, attitudes about themselves and school and their relationship with others in the program. The student's individual plan is then modified as needed. A second review of each student is conducted 45 days after entry in preparation for re-assignment to another school. Although students are generally assigned to the program for a maximum of 3 months, the administrator commonly has the discretion to retain some students who have not made sufficient progress to allow them to be successful in a traditional school setting.

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[29]There are, of course, additional programs that target students with particular behavioral problems or other conditions that increase their chances of dropping out. For example, the school district has three schools for moderately and highly disruptive students: E. Spencer Miller, Octavius Catto and Daniel Boone. We do not include a review of these programs here because their primary purpose is to remove dangerous students or those with severe disciplinary problems from traditional school settings.

APC focuses on changes to self-esteem and self-awareness as the principal approach to changing dysfunctional behavior. It has implemented an extensive system of incentives and rewards based on accumulation of points for improved performance. Each day, students are given a behavior and performance "report card" providing daily feedback from teachers and counselors. Students must have this report signed weekly by parents. The administrator calculates points weekly and posts the names of students accumulating the highest number of points. Weekly and monthly award winners are announced in the program's newspaper which is produced by students. Counselors are regularly available to students whenever they need them. In fact, students are encouraged to seek them out, whenever they feel pressures that they cannot handle. The psychiatrist on contract to the program works with both students, counselors and families to help students better control their behaviors and lives.

The program has not been formally evaluated. However, records indicate that few students drop out of the program while assigned to APC. The administrator maintains substantial post-program records on students obtained from counselors and teachers at these schools. These reports indicate that the large majority of students do not make a successful transition back into the regular school. Many return to a pattern of academic failure and soon stop attending.

Shallcross

Shallcross is an ungraded program serving about 105 students with some history of non-attendance. Students range in age from 12 to 17 (6th to 11th grade). Most students are placed at Shallcross because of attendance or cutting problems. However, there are no firm criteria for what constitutes an attendance problem; some students have shown a pattern of truancy for several years, others have skipped school or classes on limited occasions. Before assignment to Shallcross parents and program personnel must agree to the placement.

The student/faculty ratio is approximately 15 to 1. There are 7 academic course teachers, plus instructors in physical education, reading, home economics, woodshop and computer technology. Two full-time counselors work with students and families to address problems and issues leading to nonattendance. The program accepts students from across the city though most reside in districts in the upper Northeast. Despite its somewhat isolated location, students are required to use public transportation so they cannot claim to have missed the school bus. Administrators suggest that requring students to use public transportation gives the students

greater responsibility. They have established a practice of rewarding students who show improvement in arriving on time.

Students attend Shallcross for 1 to 2 years. They enter a relatively structured program which though ungraded follows the standardized curriculum in its classes. Teachers and counselors meet together regularly to discuss approaches to meeting the needs of students. As a team they seek to provide a supportive environment that reinforces good academic performance. Students are publicly recognized for good attendance and the program also rewards advisories with the best average attendance. As students become most consistent at attending school at all, the program then seeks to improve their rate of arriving on time setting new goals each week. A similar reward structure is used to acknowledge improvements in punctuality as well. After attending Shallcross for one or two years, and upon the recommendation of the principal and guidance staff, students are reassigned to a regular middle school or high school.

No formal evaluation of the program has been conducted but school personnel note that the average daily attendance at the school is higher than 70 percent. In addition, they note that there is a core of students who though assigned to Shallcross have never really attended. According to staff, excluding this core of nonattenders from the calculation would yield an ADA of 83 percent which appears impressive for a school serving this student body.

Comprehensive Services for Pregnant and Parenting Students (CSPPS)

CSPPS is a special program begun 17 years ago to provide supportive services to pregnant and parenting students. The program is located in space provided by Temple University. CSPPS offers programs for in-school pregnant students and for pregnant or parenting dropouts. It is the only school program serving pregnant and parenting students in Philadelphia. Although the program is open to both boys and girls, few male students participate. The program offers education and direct services in a nurturing and supportive environment. The program coordinator notes that the program is an important haven for pregnant girls who feel substantial intolerance and disapproval in their home schools by administrators, faculty, staff and other students.

In-school program. CSPPS receives between 800 and 1,000 applications each year and serves up to 350 students as part of its in-school program. The program has a rolling admissions program that allows girls to enroll throughout the school year. Approximately 100 students are enrolled in the in-school program at any time. Maximum class size in courses is 20 and

most classes have students who are in different grades. Students re-enroll in their home schools after giving birth. Application to the program is voluntary though CSPPS staff work directly with schools, area health agencies and social service agencies to recruit students. Admission is generally determined by time of application but younger students (aged 12 to 14) are given priority.

Any pregnant student is eligible for the program and once accepted can remain in the program for the duration of the pregnancy. The only condition of enrollment is that the pregnant girl must enroll and continue in a prenatal care program for the duration of the pregnancy. Students in the program enroll in courses from the district's standardized curriculum corresponding to the courses in which they were enrolled in their home school commensurate with their ability and progress in these classes. In addition to the standardized curriculum, students participate in group sessions that focus on parenting and coping skills, and values clarification; receive personal counseling by staff social workers, participate in educational enrichment programs, and enroll in a job readiness seminar aimed at inculcating good work habits and learning effective job search strategies. Under a Mott Foundation-supported program, Temple University students offer tutoring to all students on a regular basis. Although students re-enroll in their home schools after giving birth, CSPPS social workers continue to monitor their situation through home visits, counseling sessions, etc. for 9 to 12 months after the birth. In some difficult cases, longer term counseling follow-up is pursued. However, reductions in social worker staff have substantially limited the amount and length of post-birth counseling available through the program.

The program has weekly day-long outreach programs in two district high schools--Mastbaum and Germantown--in which a social worker holds group sessions and individual counseling sessions with pregnant and parenting students in those schools.

The CSPPS has a childcare program with space for 21 children aged 8 weeks to 24 months. Students who are certified as independent from their parents are eligible for this service. In addition, CSPPS has, in the past, maintained a relationship with Associated Daycare, to give priority to children of students in the program.

Dropout program. The CSPPS also offers educational and other support services to 50 to 60 girls who have dropped out of school. The dropout program is similar to the in-school model but emphasizes preparing students to take the GED and preparing them for employment. A restructured job readiness curriculum focuses on employability skills. Participants also take part in a job internship program. Because of the dual problems

facing these youth of pregnancy and dropping out, they also require substantially more individual counseling by CSPPS staff.

Program funding. Program support comes from an array of sources. The School District provides funding for the educational components of the program including support for GED instruction for dropouts. In addition, the district also meets some child care costs. The Philadelphia Private Industry Council supports much of the program for dropouts including its employability skills training and internship components. The Pennsylvania Department of Education pays for a major portion of the child care program. The Philadelphia Department of Human Services provides funding for the program's social workers. The latter support has experienced the most significant reductions in recent years. At its peak, CSPPS staff included 12 social workers to offer counseling to girls in both the in-school and dropout program, do home visits and continue follow-up monitoring for up to 2 years after the girl gave birth. However, municipal support for social workers at the agency has been cut substantially so that the program now only has 3 social workers assigned to case work and 1 who oversees participant intake to the program. As a result of these reductions, post-partum follow-up has been limited to 9 to 12 months in all but the most severe cases. Ironically, as the program coordinator notes, it is at this stage in the infant's life that young mothers are in the most need of outside support.

Program impact. CSPPS staff have done some follow-up with students who have participated in the program. They report that unplanned repeat pregnancies among participants were as low as 4.5 percent among girls in the program between 1983 and 1985. The program has not been able to mount a full-scale follow-up of participating students' return to school, academic success and graduation rates though they do have the program records to launch such a study with the assistance of the Office of Research and Evaluation.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS IN PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia has a number of alternative programs designed to serve students with a rigorous academic program for average and above average students. These programs, many of which are nationally recognized, offer strong examples of alternative approaches in focus, curricula, support services and instructional methodologies that are instructive for the school district at large. Below, we describe three programs--Parkway, Franklin Learning Center and the Motivation Program--that individually and as a group offer illustrative models for redesigning how students are taught in regular schools. Since these programs are well known, our descriptions are cursory and

limited to program elements we believe are most relevant to this report.

Parkway Program

The Parkway Program began in the 1960s as an experimental alternative program serving highly motivated students who could benefit from an educational experience drawing upon cultural and educational resources of the entire community. In recent years, the program has imposed a more structured educational approach, instituting the district standardized curriculum and placing greater emphasis on the completion of regular school courses. However, the program continues to make extensive use of community resources--museums, libraries, internships, etc. Students may petition for independent study courses and may enroll in college courses. At present approximately 60 Parkway students are enrolled in 100 college courses at area institutions.

Parkway serves approximately 925 students at four sites. Students are selected in a lottery system from among applicants having "C" or above averages, good behavior and high attendance. Application levels are high; most recently, more than 1000 students applied for 300 slots in the entering freshman class. Parkway operates from four bases in Philadelphia including center city, two university settings and an unused school in North Philadelphia. There are 55 professional staff assigned to the program exclusive of individuals in the community who supervise student interns or teach college courses. The focus of the program is preparation for entry into post-secondary education. Over 70 percent of Parkway graduates enter colleges or universities.

Both students and faculty are highly motivated. Faculty are given considerable latitude and many have been recognized in city and state competitions for their teaching ability. The program encourages professional growth and is an important source of department heads, principals and other administrative positions for the school district.

Franklin Learning Center

The Franklin Learning Center was initiated in 1974 with a grant from an area foundation to develop a restructured high school to serve students expected to be displaced with the anticipated closing of the William Penn High building. For a variety of reasons, the anticipated closing of William Penn did not transpire. However, the Franklin Learning Center emerged as a

citywide high school that offered an alternative approach to instruction for students meeting entrance requirements.[30]

The program serves approximately 850 students who are assigned into one of four components or houses within the school. The components are academically-oriented groupings--a college-bound component called the Academy focuses on preparing students for entry into college; the Vocational component offers training that prepares students for entry level positions in a number of fields; an Arts and Humanities Component for students seeking a career in art, dance, theatre or music; and a Health Sciences program which incorporates both practical training and academic preparation for students interested in health careers. Students in all components are required to participate in some type of service activity in the school or community.

The school district's standardized curriculum is used in all components; however, it has been modified to serve as the basis for a continuous progress curriculum that is competency/mastery-based. Each "class" in the curriculum is, in reality, a series of 10 or so individual minicourses with clearly defined objectives and methods of assessment. Each has an associated "packet" including materials, tests, worksheets, etc. which a student is expected to master before proceeding to the next. Students receive credit for each minicourse or credit they complete and in which they can demonstrate competence through testing. Students can complete packets at a pace commensurate with their abilities and interest and thus may progress through some classes quickly. Students may be re-assigned at almost any time during the school year to new courses to begin the learning modules in that class.

Teachers evaluate student materials frequently and submit a data form to the central record keeping department of the school on a regular (almost daily) basis. This computer-based management information system is at the heart of monitoring student progress and gives the Franklin Learning Center considerable flexibility in its programming and scheduling.[31]

One of the most crucial components of the Franklin Learning Center is its emphasis on competency-based instruction. In contrast to most schools where credit is given for passing grade at even a "D" level, students at Franklin Learning Center

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[30]Students are admitted based on strong grade and attendance records, an entrance test and an individual interview.

[31]It is important to note that due to the special circumstances at the Franklin Learning Center, all record keeping for the Franklin Learning Center students is maintained within the center and is not given to the central administration for processing.

do not receive credit unless they pass the competency test associated with that module with a grade of 85 or above (i.e. A or B). This mastery approach to granting credit demands much of both students and faculty.

However, the high standard of achievement built into the Franklin Learning Center's mastery learning approach may be the cause of the high turnover among students. Many students choose to return to their home school where standards for passing are lower.[32] However, students who remain at Franklin Learning Center speak favorably about "really learning the material" and doing what is expected.

The Franklin Learning Center has three additional features that warrant mention. First, it operates a relatively large day care center serving infants as young as 6 weeks old and children as old as 5 years. The child care service is open to the public but gives preference to children of students in the center. Some students work in the child care program to meet their community service graduation requirement.

Second, since its beginning, the center has attempted to integrate adult returning students into its program. At one time almost 20 percent of all students were over 21. Program personnel note, however, that Franklin Learning Center has not been successful in attempting to serve returning dropouts, especially those aged 16 to 25, because the program was not equipped to deal with the wide range of needs these youth had.

While the number of adults in the regular program has dropped in recent years because of diminished state subsidies and other reasons, the center offers an intensive, certified nursing assistant program which allows older students (predominantly young women receiving public assistance) to obtain a marketable skill within 6 months. Center staff believe the example of these adults re-entering school to obtain a skill is important for students in the regular program.

Finally, not all students are successful in meeting the demands placed on them through the competency-based, self-paced approach at Franklin Learning Center. The program has responded by placing a number of students in a contained classroom where they take an intensive program with a team of two teachers (an example of an alternative program within an alternative school). In conversations with students, we learned that many

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[32]The Franklin Learning Center has not undertaken a study of how many students return to their home schools or their reasons for returning. They note, however, that academic difficulty is one of several reasons--distance travelled, neighborhood, sports programs, etc.--that students give when transferring.

felt overwhelmed by the apparent freedom but high demands of the program but that this sheltered classroom setting was helping them develop some of the study and academic skills needed to succeed in the center.

The Motivation Program

The objective of the Motivation Program is to identify youth who have the potential to succeed in higher education and give them the self-confidence and academic preparation they need to be admitted and succeed in college. The program serves approximately 2100 students from eight comprehensive high schools. In five, the program is offered within the high school. At these schools, Motivation students are usually block rostered to meet the course requirements mandated by the program. At three sites, Motivation program students attend a separate facility though they remain "on-roll" at the home high school. These students take all classes at this off-site facility.

The program provides additional course work in English and mathematics and requires three years of social studies and science and two years of foreign language study. Students are also required to attend or participate in a minimum of two cultural events each month and to write a report about them. Parents are required to attend monthly meetings at program sites and are encouraged to assist with homework and to participate in school activities.

Most sites have developed a significant college counseling capacity which offers individual counseling on college and testing applications, invites speakers and representatives from colleges to meet with students and organizes visits to area college campuses. The program offers substantial amounts of individual and group tutoring on most afternoons after the school day. These tutoring sessions are led by Motivation teachers.

Students who participate in the Motivation Program are generally average students who need encouragement to realize their potential for further education. They are recommended to the program by counselors and teachers and are selected by program staff on the basis of grades, attendance and performance on standardized tests. Few students leave the program once enrolled and about 84 percent attend college after graduation. In several sites, 100 percent of seniors were accepted into college. As in any multi-site program, the quality and implementation varies from school to school. However, at its best, Motivation has the potential of expanding the opportunities for students who normally would not consider higher education.

APPLICATION OF KEY PRINCIPLES IN PHILADELPHIA PROGRAMS

It is not surprising that many of the major dropout prevention and alternative education initiatives in Philadelphia mirror the principles and practices cited as critical to effectively serving at-risk youth. We regularly observed the application of these tenets in a variety of ways in these programs. Below, we use Philadelphia examples to illustrate how some of these principles have been implemented.

Delivering education in small intensive units

The programs described above have taken a variety of approaches to implementing this principle. The Academies and CIS insulate program participants from larger schools by block rostering or creating schools-within-schools. It is important to note also that many of the newly created middle schools throughout the system have divided their schools into houses or smaller units in an effort to reduce the anonymity of larger settings. Many programs--Alternative Placement Center, Shallcross, Parkway, Douglas-Carroll, Jones-Stetson, Franklin Learning Center, CSPPS and parts of the Motivation Program--operate in off-site facilities removing students from the larger school environment. Students and teachers regularly cite this isolation as a reason why they attend or why the program works.

To reinforce the sense of identity, most of these programs take special pride in serving "our students", by emphasizing the specialness of being in the program and encouraging a sense of identification with it through newspapers, clubs, sweatshirts and other team-building activities.

Improving esteem and setting high expectations

Staff of the programs believes that improving students' self-esteem is important for academic success and for keeping youth in school. In some of the programs serving the most at-risk students--APC, Shallcross, Douglas-Carroll, Jones-Stetson and CSPPS--teachers work to strengthen students' basic sense of self-worth by setting short-range goals, working to improve attitudes and behaviors and rewarding modest improvements. Programs working with somewhat less at-risk students seek to expand these students' expectations for themselves. In the case of the Motivation program, students are encouraged to consider entering and graduating from college as a realistic goal; similarly in the Academies and some units of the Franklin Learning Center, students are encouraged to pursue their education as a vehicle to enter a fulfilling career. The Franklin Learning Center has also adopted a high standard (i.e., 85% demonstrated competence) for each of these learning modules in order to receive credit.

Alternative instructional techniques

Even within these special programs, education is traditionally delivered in a structured environment with teacher lectures as the predominant pedagogical device. However, several programs have consciously attempted to re-structure the curriculum to achieve particular results. For example, the Academies seek to integrate vocational topics into the academic curriculum and similarly use vocational classes to reinforce academic skills.

Both the Parkway and Motivation programs have developed strong links with other educational and cultural institutions to provide their students with an array of resources to bolster learning. Finally, the Franklin Learning Center has substantially modified the way the standardized curriculum is delivered by dividing each yearlong course into a set of 10 modules through which students must pass. It is thus a competency-based approach.

Offering comprehensive services

Comprehensive approaches to meeting the needs of students are somewhat rare in Philadelphia, even in these specialized programs. While most provide some services in addition to instruction, few offer a broad range. Nevertheless, some of these programs make a substantial effort to address the wide range of students' needs. CIS is the most comprehensive approach. It has brought together a consortium of educational resources, social service agencies and government departments in an attempt to meet the needs of at-risk students. CSPPS provides counseling, child care services and health support for its students. Programs such as APC, Shallcross, Jones-Stetson and Douglas-Carroll attempt to work with parents and families as a way to ameliorate some of the problems their students face. Although they have not been uniformly successful, these efforts indicate the recognition that many problems faced by students are rooted in circumstances outside of the school.

Sustained adult contact

Several programs have specifically sought to incorporate sustained adult contact as a major element. Many also foster sustained contact with teachers because they are small and insulated from the larger school setting. Almost all of the programs have a limited number of teachers at each site with whom students might take classes. Hence, it is likely that during the two or four years the students remain in the program they will develop a rapport with one or two of these instructors.

Within the Academy model, a team of teachers is assigned to the Academy. The team works as a unit jointly assessing student progress and working together to develop instructional strate-

gies for failing youth. Students are likely to have the same instructor for a major academic or vocational course several times during their four years in the academy. In some middle schools, CIS fosters sustained adult contact by keeping students to a single room or two for their major courses. A team of two teachers jointly teach all major subjects to these students. In CIS in high schools, sustained adult contact is also achieved through regular meetings with the CIS counselor. Shallcross and APC have additional counselors assigned to the program who meet with students regularly to help them resolve personal and academic problems. The Motivation program similarly brings in adults from the community to encourage students and reinforce the program's mission.

Links with the community

As we have indicated, many of these programs make overt efforts to involve the larger community--parents, the private sector, universities, etc. The Academies have school teams comprised of business representatives who visit the school regularly and through whom after-school, summer and full-time employment is often found. Similarly, CIS has a host of community organizations that supports its efforts through contributions, special services, job referrals and the like. Parkway and Motivation maintain special links with cultural and university resources.

Almost all of the programs make an effort to include parents in their activities though success in programs serving the most at risk has remained elusive. Other programs--Motivation, Parkway, Franklin Learning Center--have been more successful in enlisting parental support. Note, however, that these programs often serve students who are either highly motivated themselves or who come from home environments with material or emotional resources available to support education.

Incentive structures rewarding achievement

Each of the programs uses a broad range of incentives and encouragement to reward improved performance. Most programs publicly recognize improvement in grades, perfect attendance and special service within the program. Such recognition at APC, for example, is done by posting announcements in the hallways that name students whose attendance has been perfect for the month or whose grades have placed them on the honor roll. Their names are also announced in the monthly newspaper that APC produces and distributes to students, parents and the school district.

Shallcross uses similar techniques and especially rewards students for improvement in attendance and arriving to school on time. Each site of the Academies publishes lists of students who are achieving high academic marks, recognizes stu-

dents who are deemed "job ready" (certified as eligible to be considered for positions with sponsoring companies) and announces the names of students who have been placed in jobs during the school year and after graduation. The Academies also hold annual awards banquets for all students in the program where especially deserving students, classes and teachers are recognized.

Some programs also use other rewards--jackets, dinners and lunches, etc.--to recognize good performance by students. Sometimes this is done informally; in other instances there is a more structured system in place.

Programs serving better achieving students (Parkway, Motivation, Franklin Learning Center) make use of similar incentives and rewards. For example, the Motivation program has regular access to many cultural events in the community. While students are required to attend a certain number of events as part of their participation in the program, they also have the opportunity to sign up for additional excursions if they wish. Some well-performing students from programs are also rewarded by being appointed as representatives of the program to conduct tours for visitors, to go with program coordinators to recruit new students and to serve as hosts for special events held at their schools.

It is important to note that most of the incentives provided through these programs are relatively low-cost. They also generally are not the core of the program but rather serve to reinforce it.

Removing structural barriers

Many of the programs have attempted to remove some of the structural or procedural barriers that prevent students from succeeding in school. For example, both the Academies and CIS work with area businesses and organizations to place students, when appropriate, in part-time employment. Such placements allow the programs to maintain some control over the student's work while monitoring their academic performance. In addition, they provide students with often much-needed money and may prevent them from leaving school to find employment on their own.

Programs such as Shallcross, APC and CSPPS have adopted a variety of policies and practices that are tailored to the special needs of their students. For example, Shallcross does not offer transportation services, requiring students to use public transportation, thereby eliminating "missing the bus" as an excuse for not attending. While Shallcross expects and encourages students to arrive in school on time, it does not

prevent students who arrive late from attending class nor extensively punish them for being tardy.

In the case of APC, if a student feels that he is about to become abusive towards a teacher or another student he is encouraged to leave the classroom for a "time-out" period or immediately to seek a counselor or another teacher to help him work through the anger or frustration.

Douglas-Carroll maintains an open-door policy to allow students to re-enter the program even if they have dropped out of the program several times before. In addition, the program is willing to accept students "on the spot" even though the student's records have not yet been transferred.

As a major part of its services to students, CSPPS provides child care and health counseling.

CONCLUSION

Thus, across Philadelphia schools, there are strong examples of the principles identified as crucial in research on academic improvement and the dropout prevention literature. However, it is equally apparent that these programs alone cannot address the substantial needs of students throughout the district. Further, even among these programs, few offer a comprehensive approach that appears to be required. In the next chapter, we propose a set of recommendations designed to implement these principles on a systemwide basis.

V. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Previous chapters have summarized recent literature on effective schools, promising academic improvement efforts and assessments of national dropout prevention models. Then a set of educational and operational principles underlying programmatic interventions in the national literature was developed. In addition, the range of initiatives within Philadelphia that seek to improve academic performance and reduce the likelihood of dropping out were reviewed. This review indicated that many of the principles identified as crucial are being implemented in Philadelphia, though not on a systemwide basis. Drawing upon all of these, this chapter makes explicit suggestions for improving academic achievement and graduation rates among students.

The recommendations reflect our understanding of the nature of the problems in Philadelphia and represent our attempt to devise an approach to resolving them. They are presented in the context of three directives from the district that helped focus our efforts:

- Focus recommendations on grades 5 through 12. The school district has already embarked on efforts to improve academic performance in the elementary grades; additionally, it is reviewing ways to better use federal and state funds to bolster primary grade services. Of course, the direct effect of these initiatives will not be felt in the upper grade levels for several years.

- Make recommendations for improvements in academic performance and reductions in dropout rates that go beyond the addition of small programs designed to serve limited numbers of youth.

- To the extent possible, make recommendations that inform the planned restructuring of comprehensive high schools.

The recommendations set forth in this chapter were developed within these guidelines. Elements of many of the approaches we recommend can be found in different Philadelphia programs and schools. In many instances, we urge instituting these elements across the entire district. In addition, other recommendations, while not yet implemented, are not totally new to the district. In fact, some similar approaches were proposed when the district's new promotion policies were implemented; due to budgetary constraints and the high number of failures resulting from stricter performance standards, they have proven difficult

to implement. Our recommendations build upon these earlier plans offering both added proof of their need and some suggestions on overcoming barriers to their implementation.

THE NEED FOR A SYSTEMWIDE RESPONSE

Each of our recommendations assumes the need for implementation systemwide. By systemwide, we mean making the recommendation part of normal district policy. Taken individually, no single recommendation is particularly controversial. However, if implemented as part of an overall plan and implemented systemwide they would represent a profound reformation of the way public education is delivered in Philadelphia. We believe that our focus on systemwide solutions is both necessary and compelling.

First, the magnitude of the problem of poor academic achievement and high levels of dropping out demands a systemic solution. In large urban school districts, where dropout rates hover in the 35 to 40 percent range, dropout prevention strategies should not be small and targeted, but need to be implemented broadly. Any small dropout prevention program would be totally overwhelmed by the vast numbers of youth who are "at risk". Data from Philadelphia support this point: before summer school experience is taken into account, only 66 percent of 7th graders are promoted to the 8th grade and only 69.6 percent of eighth graders are promoted into the ninth grade and roughly 10 percent of each grade fail that grade for the second consecutive year. Broad scale changes in the way students are educated, identified as failing, offered remediation and provided with additional academic and social support are needed to meet the problems suggested by these failure rates.

It is important to note also that by systemwide we explicitly reject the widespread institution of small-scale efforts, i.e., the implementation of small programs in each middle and high school. But we do propose to integrate the principles found in such small-scale initiatives--such as the Academies or Cities in Schools--into the larger school setting. We believe that a strategy whose primary response was to implement a series of small individual programs would be ill-advised for it would not reach the large majority of students in need of assistance.

The second compelling reason for adopting a systemwide approach is that the problems of inadequate academic performance are not isolated in a particular part of the system. The problems exist at all grade levels and across all districts. Table 1 presented at the end of Chapter 2 indicates substantial retention rates at each grade level prior to summer school experience. Additional data suggest that these problems are not localized in one or two districts but are apparent in all.

Third, even if a response was developed to serve the students identified as at-risk by virtue of having just failed a grade--an equally large or possibly larger number of students remain marginally at-risk within the schools. They perform just well enough to pass from year to year but often lack the basic skills to succeed either at the next educational level or in employment once graduated. The gravity of their position is often overshadowed by the magnitude of the problems of students who are failing already.

Fourth, even students whom data would indicate are "successful" often remain at-risk. Fifteen percent of all graduates of the class of 1985 were not fully engaged (either in full-time employment or postsecondary education) several months after graduation; the comparable number for graduates of comprehensive high schools was 30 to 35 percent (Education for Employment Task Force, 1986). According to school district data, the proportion of students who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) (expressed as the percent tested over the total number of 1986 graduates) in preparation for applying to postsecondary education was only 39 percent. However, even among this limited number of students who thought about entering college after graduation, the average combined SAT score was 771 in 1986 compared with a national average of 906. Postsecondary school officials report that students who enter college with SAT scores substantially below the national norm are likely to leave college within the first year. Thus, apparent school district successes are at risk of becoming failures at the next level of education. We conclude that systemwide change is needed that reaches beyond addressing the needs of students who are most 'at-risk' to increasing the academic achievements of all in the district.

Finally, high family mobility is a common characteristic of students enrolled in urban schools. This high intra-district and inter-district student mobility makes it necessary that any academic improvement/dropout prevention initiative be systemwide in order to reach these students as they enter the school district at different times and places.

THE NEED FOR A COMMUNITYWIDE RESPONSE

Although we believe that the scope of the problems facing Philadelphia schools and students requires a systemwide approach, we are also firmly convinced that an approach solely limited to the resources of the school district will not be adequate to address the task. Undergirding many of our recommendations is the assumption that substantial support from the broader Philadelphia community is necessary. Thus, in addition to a school district systemwide approach, we call for citywide support and involvement in these efforts.

According to some observers, schools in recent years have been asked to meet an ever-broadening array of students' personal and social problems (e.g., poor nutrition, poor health, substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy and lack of shelter). Other observers note that schools have traditionally met many of these needs but never for such a high percentage of youth. What is agreed on by all, however, is that these kinds of problems must be addressed in order for youth to learn.

Schools cannot be expected to meet the full range of student needs alone. Effective solutions will only emerge when the resources of parents, the private sector, universities, churches, city and state agencies and other organizations are tapped.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: SPECIFIC SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Our review of the research literature, discussions with national leaders and policy makers in the areas of academic performance improvement and dropout prevention and assessments of exemplary dropout prevention initiatives leads us to the firm conviction that no single, clear solution or program is likely to fundamentally improve academic performance or reduce dropout rates substantially. In general, the research does not reveal a quantitatively-supported answer. However, the vast literature on improving academic performance and reducing the likelihood of dropping out does suggest a set of principles that could make a difference if implemented. Below, we propose a set of operational and management recommendations embodying these principles. In addition, we suggest specific ways in which these recommendations can be implemented in the schools.

The nine specific recommendations taken together constitute a framework for action to address the educational needs of Philadelphia school children. We have specifically avoided advancing "The Plan," believing that individual schools and units can better accomplish education using a design that is tailored to their particular circumstances. Rather, what we propose is a schematic for engendering school reform at the school and unit level.

The recommendations below are not intended to eliminate a priori existing magnet schools, limited admissions schools or other programs (though we anticipate that some programs will become indistinguishable from regular school practice if the recommendations are followed). Indeed, many of the recommendations made below are being realized in them and give the district good examples of how these recommendations can be achieved. To eliminate them would be foolhardy. However, to exempt these schools and programs from reassessing themselves in light of our recommendations would be equally wrong. Even

among the best and most sophisticated, there is substantial room for improvement.

The focus of our recommendations are firmly grounded in prevention approaches and rely less on interventions after a problem has appeared. We realize that these recommendations have differential costs associated with them. Some recommendations can be implemented with few additional funds. Some involve considerable additional expenditures. However, such highly expensive items need not be automatically discarded since it is possible that some funds may be saved or may be reallocated from other areas. However, it is equally likely additional expenditures will be required. We strongly believe that such additional costs are fully justified to address the challenges facing Philadelphia schools and students.

Serving all students

> Recommendation 1: Schools should be divided into smaller units or houses to which both students and teachers are assigned for several years.

Breaking existing schools into smaller units has the benefit of reducing the psychological impact of school for youth and teachers, allows more creative mechanisms for dealing with the problems of individual students, creates a more sensible unit of accountability, and can provide a much better way of linking the community into the educational system. There are a variety of examples of houses or small units operating within the Philadelphia school system. In particular, many middle schools have adopted a house format. Many other models exist nationwide. By making this recommendation, our intent is not to dictate a particular implementation scheme but rather to allow individual schools to determine the nature and structure of the smaller units. However, there are several key elements which we believe must be implemented while still allowing substantial latitude in application:

- Size: Between 200 and 400 students should be assigned to each unit.

- Faculty: Teachers are part of a team assigned to the unit over a period of time. Students are block rostered to the classes of these teachers for the core courses. Breaking larger schools into smaller units with an assigned faculty also reduces overall student load for teachers since the total number of students with whom they will come in contact will be limited to the 200 to 400 students assigned to that unit.

- o **Location:** The unit is located in a well-defined area, that is, a separate floor, a wing, etc.

- o **Thematic Focus:** Units may be organized around occupational, social or other themes that provide a focus for the unit, its students and its curriculum.[33] This thematic approach may serve to make the distinctions between units real and not mere artifacts.

- o **Student Heterogeneity:** Units are heterogeneous in academic ability--houses are not reconstituted academic tracking programs. That is, each unit should enroll students of all grades in the school and at all levels of academic ability and achievement. Units are heterogeneous by grades also, so that older students in later grades can be a source of tutoring, mentoring and other support for younger students.

- o **Social Support Team:** Each unit should have a team composed of teachers, counselors and other personnel that can assist faculty and students in meeting problems. Such teams should have the capacity to develop educational support plans to assist students and should also have links with the broader community to make competent and informed referrals for special services for youth.

The recommendation to break larger schools into smaller units is an educational and operational cornerstone of the overall framework for action proposed in the report. Its implementation is necessary for many of the following recommendations. We believe that dividing larger schools into smaller units can be accomplished at little additional cost but with the promise of substantial educational return.

> Recommendation 2: Take steps to increase sustained adult contact within units by assigning teachers to unit instructional teams, developing schedules that place students with the same teacher for several years, and introducing other adults into the schooling process for extended periods of contact.

Breaking larger schools into small educational units will have little effect if the level of student/teacher or student/adult

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[33]Some suggested themes might include: broad industry topics; critical issues in the city (homelessness, child abuse, environmental concerns); issues in the school (graffiti, physical plant); and community service projects.

contact is not enhanced. As part of our proposal to divide schools into smaller units, we believe that teachers should be assigned to these individual units as a team. By keeping teachers and students together in a single unit, individual teachers will have the opportunity to see the same set of students for several years, may have the student for more than one class, and will have the responsibility for taking a longer term view of the student's academic performance while in the unit. The net result will be increased accountability for student performance by the students themselves, teachers and units.

Additionally, this could make teachers' jobs a bit easier by reducing the number of different youth who pass through their classes year after year.

Central to the discussion of achieving sustained adult contact between students and teachers must be a re-examination of district policies relating to teacher mobility during the school year and the assignment of long-term substitute instructors to classes. While we recognize that emergency situations often require changing teacher assignments, we encourage giving the educational needs of children full weight when making re-assignments on the basis of seniority and administrative need during the school year.

We propose that units be supported by a social service support team designed to assist teachers and units meet their students' remedial, social, health and other needs. The support teams will be an important component of the unit. Its members, all of whom may not be school personnel, will be an additional source of adult contact for students.

Recognizing that there may never be enough adults within a unit or school to meet all the needs, we also propose that units foster peer support among students themselves. Peer support can be an invaluable resource for delivering tutoring and social support and also can yield increased unit and school spirit.

Recommendation 3: We propose that the district devise ways to substantially reduce the average class size in core course areas.

The issue of reduced class size is a critical one within urban school districts. Fiscal realities make reductions in student-teacher ratios appear untenable yet the deep educational needs of the students enrolled in inner-city public schools are an equally compelling reality with future social liabilities. The evidence on the benefits of reduced class size is clear.

Research indicates that smaller student to teacher ratios, especially those below 20 to 1, result in a host of conditions

that foster effective education: increased student-teacher contact; opportunities for varied instructional approaches; better classroom management; more opportunities for individualization of instruction; improved student attitudes and attendance; and higher achievement among students who are academically at risk. These impacts can be expected at the elementary and secondary levels as well as among primary grades.

Throughout the recommendations in this chapter we offer suggestions that may achieve some of the benefits associated with smaller class size. However, we remain convinced, as do other researchers, teachers and school officials that reducing class size is an important step in improving how students are served in schools.

> Recommendation 4: Services to students provided by schools must be marked by a comprehensive approach that recognizes the multiple causes of poor academic performance. It therefore includes educational support, remediation, instruction in coping skills, counseling, and referrals to external agencies.

The students in today's urban schools face an array of personal and social pressures that reduce their chances for academic achievement. While schools cannot resolve the whole range of problems facing their students, they must develop strategies to reduce the effects these problems have on students' academic performance. Part of the solution lies in recognizing that proximate causes of poor academic performance or dropping out often have a number of correlates--drug abuse, need for basic skills remediation, home problems, pregnancy and parenting, or economic pressures--that cannot be resolved by a monosymptomatic approach. In addition, each unit and each school must develop programs that give students concrete, interactive experiences in essential refusal and coping skills to better manage their own lives. For example, programs that address drug and alcohol abuse must be expanded. Similarly, school must encourage participation in initiatives proven to be effective in promoting wise and reasoned approaches to sex and avoiding pregnancy.

The unit and school must establish an effective network of intra-school and external resources for meeting the needs of youth. Thus, the unit and school must know what types of resources are available <u>within</u> the district and have ready access to them. In addition, the school must work to establish a practical system of referrals out to community resources. In both instances, however, the individual school or unit must not use the referral or safety net system as a way to limit its responsibility to the student (and his/her problems). Instead, each unit must continue to have a stake in the resolution of

the student's problems and be accountable for getting that youth back into a school environment.

The creation of an effective system to provide comprehensive services to students will require the introduction of more resources into the schools. First, more counselors will be needed in schools to support the units and serve as ombudsmen for students dealing with district administration and social service agencies. To the extent that citywide collaboration is enacted, additional personnel will need to be placed at the individual school level to facilitate and manage links with the broader community. For example, a school development officer could work with teachers and units to identify particular educational or other resource needs that might be met in the community and then work in the community (universities, libraries, museums, private corporations, etc.) to obtain them. Such a position in high schools in Boston was a very important liaison between the schools and the community.

Within middle and senior high schools, career advisors/job developers should be assigned to individual units to work with students to set career objectives, link students with summer and part-time jobs and serve as a liaison with employers to monitor work performance and with teachers to monitor academic progress.

Across the district, the availability and access of community services to students and their families could be increased by allowing service agency personnel to establish offices in schools. These offices may not be needed in every school but should minimally be located in each cluster. Service personnel could be integrated into the school environment as much as possible and used by social and academic support teams. In fact, the social support team could include the unit head, teachers, counselors, outplaced agency people, job developers, and the schoolwide development officer.

While the creation of a more comprehensive system of meeting the many needs of children would involve substantial costs, we believe that some of these costs could conceivably be borne by sources <u>outside</u> the school system, including the private sector through the Private Industry Council and the city. In many instances, these services are already available or are being provided to students but often in an uncoordinated manner. Our plan supports efforts to streamline their delivery and focus their efforts by placing them in the schools.

Recommendation 5: Infuse alternative instructional methodologies as a way to stimulate, excite and encourage youth to achieve; provide teachers with the training and resources fundamentally to change how they help children learn.

The strategies proposed above alone cannot substantially improve academic performance in the absence of quality instruction. We propose that the first step in academic improvement is raising the academic expectations of students, teachers and the community. Our observations suggest that Philadelphia has a strong teacher corps which can be challenged to deliver education effectively given proper incentives and support. We believe, however, that the predominant methods of teaching children--instructor-centered, lecture-based, emphasizing memorization and verbatim recitation--have proven to be inadequate in meeting the educational needs of many children. We recommend that teachers at all levels be armed with a broad arsenal of teaching methodologies to use in their classrooms. To be effective, this variety of teaching approaches will require substantial training, support and assistance at the central administration, school and unit levels. Standardized curriculum materials will need to be modified to make them compatible with the alternative methodologies.

Within each school, faculty will have access to schoolwide teaching support teams or academic resource teams. These teams will be comprised of lead teachers and department heads with specialized training in designing curricula approaches for academically-failing youth. Teachers may call upon the team for recommendations in dealing with particular student problems or may request general assistance for teaching specific topics or materials. These teaching teams will be responsible for infusing new instructional approaches throughout the school, working with teachers to devise individual learning plans for students experiencing difficulty and coordinating the academic support and remediation efforts--after school and Saturday tutoring, remediation, summer school--offered through the school.

Serving failing students

We believe that the first five recommendations will significantly enhance the chances of academic success among all Philadelphia students. However, we must also recognize that these proposals cannot solve the educational needs of all students. We thus propose interventions of increasing intensity that identify problems and mandate specific actions before students drop out.

Recommendation 6: Establish a system of academic and student social services within school units to identify achievement and other problems early, devise plans to ameliorate their effects and make effective referrals for students whose needs cannot be met in the unit.

We believe that the primary point of identification and solution to most student problems is within the individual educational unit. It is generally the responsibility of individual teachers to provide the necessary academic remediation to solve immediate performance problems. However, sometimes an academic problem cannot be solved in the classroom except at the expense of other students. As noted above, each unit should have a support team whose function is to solve individual students' academic and other problems as they emerge.

There are different ways to conceive of team roles and functions. In the ideal situation, the team would review each student's progress every 8 weeks based on material from computerized student records and teacher reports. Youth would be lauded for good behavior. For example, letters could be sent to the parents of youth with perfect attendance. Any problems with attendance and performance would be discussed and an individualized plan would be developed for that student. (Pittsburgh has just implemented such a system in a few schools.) Another option, less tied to a computerized student record system, would be to direct the social support team to take action whenever prolonged truancy (over 3 days) or beginning signs of poor performance were identified. A meeting of the formal review team should be mandatory if a student fails a course.

In some instances, the team may make instructional recommendations to help the teacher reach the student. More frequently, the team may conduct its own assessment to diagnose the problem and identify what causes underlie it. Once this assessment is completed, it is the responsibility of the team to develop a plan for the student that addresses the needs identified in the assessment. Such a plan may offer a mixture of counseling, remediation and tutoring within the school and referrals to external agencies if appropriate.

Each student who has failed a grade must be assigned to an adult who works within the school in some capacity. This person will work with the student and monitor his/her progress. This will assure that such youth will not just disappear. We estimate that each adult in a school would be assigned about four such students to monitor.

The final component of any plan must be a system of monitoring student performance to ensure that the plan has its intended results. The principal objective for the support team must be

to devise a plan that, if possible, addresses the students' needs within the unit or the school. Referrals or transfers to special, alternative programs should occur only in extreme cases. These are described next.

> Recommendation 7: Expand existing alternative educational opportunities and develop new programs for students whose needs cannot be met within the individual school units.

Alternative educational programs are separate initiatives that seek to address a range of academic failure/dropout behavior problems exhibited by a student. They are designed to be programs to which students are assigned when in-school remedies have not been effective or when the evidence of "at-riskness" is so overwhelming that immediate placement is essential in order to retain the student. Their principal goal is the same as the whole educational system: to provide students with the ability to continue life-time learning, participate intelligently in contemporary society and be a productive member of the community. As a subgoal, programs are designed, when appropriate, to provide students with the skills and support to re-enter the traditional educational system. Most important, special alternative programs are a systemwide response to meet the educational needs of students whom the district has failed to serve; the larger share of responsibility for this failure ought to be on the district and not on the student.

Were the systemwide changes mentioned above in place for a number of years, one would hope that few students would need such alternative programs. However, given the current school profile, many youth currently in the system might be appropriately served in such an alternative setting. There are numerous possible criteria which would make students eligible for referral to special programs designed to improve severe academic deficiencies or reduce the likelihood of their dropping out. These could include having failed the same grade twice (DNMCs) or having failed only once but have stopped attending (or attend infrequently)[34]

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[34]There is a dilemma about how restrictive or open the eligibility criteria should be. Some argue that any student recommended by the house faculty for placement in an alternative setting ought to be placed there, since if a house faculty contends it cannot serve a student, it is likely to do a poor job of it. Clearly, the student would do better in an alternative school. On the other hand, such a policy might encourage teachers to push out at-risk, difficult to serve students and permit an abdication (abrogation) of their responsibility for such at-risk students.

Whatever criteria are finally adopted must ensure that students truly in need of special placements are not excluded because of narrowly drawn definitions of "at-risk". In addition, the criteria should be developed in a manner to ensure that they define eligibility and not mandatory placement for students whom teachers, units or schools believe can be effectively served within existing school or unit programs.

The profile of targeted programs is often an extension or enhancement of the elements of the re-defined schools and units we have described above. These programs should have increased social support and review by a social support team to determine approximate intervention plans, alternative methods of instruction, flexible hours and child care (to be discussed in the next section). In addition, the following ought to be characteristic of such settings:

- Lower student/faculty and student/counselor ratios. Students placed in special programs have manifested a need for closer student/teacher and student/counselor contact.

- A highly motivated staff. If special programs are established to teach students whom the traditional school system has been unable to serve, it is critical that program staff be specifically selected for their demonstrated ability and willingness to work with extremely academically at-risk youth. The challenges for teaching such youth are great and it is appropriate that additional compensation be awarded to these faculty.

- Placed in age-appropriate settings or comprised of similar-aged youth. Research indicates that students who have failed two or more grades often feel out of place because their classmates are substantially younger. This 'differentness' has been identified as a factor leading to dropping out.

- Diagnostic testing to identify key learning deficiencies. Many students in these programs have failed in school because of a particular deficiency, i.e. reading, computation, writing--that holds back their performance in other areas. This area should be given the greatest attention, even at the expense of other subject areas.

- No grade distinctions. The students in these programs have generally been unsuccessful within the traditional education system. In particular, they have often not progressed through grades. An un-

graded setting may diminish some of the stigma associated with their past failures.

- Individualized, competency-based instruction. Deficiencies need to be addressed and students need to progress at their own pace. Individualized, competency based systems (such as CCP) where material is broken into small, easily mastered units and achievement is measured against individual baselines would be appropriate.

- Multiple options for completion. These special programs, especially those directed at students of senior high school age, need to provide different routes for students to complete school successfully. Thus, programs might offer pre-GED and GED preparation classes to students for whom graduation through the traditional curriculum will most likely be unattainable.

- Linking each student with an adult. In the house plan above, each student who failed a grade was linked to an adult. We believe that such an approach is needed in alternative settings as well. If these alternative programs are spread throughout existing buildings, then there may be enough adults available. However, if the alternative programs are housed in a separate location, then a one-to-one link cannot be achieved with school district personnel alone since the cost would be prohibitive. Pairing students with college students would achieve such adult contact in a cost effective fashion. Area colleges and universities are an excellent resource of near-peer counselors or tutors for these students. One way to facilitate the use of college-age assistants would be to locate some of these special programs, especially those at the high school level, directly on the campuses of area colleges and universities where they can be jointly administered by the college and school district. Experience in New York City and other cities indicates that programs for at-risk youth may benefit from proximity to college campuses where education is valued as a legitimate pursuit. Such programs have immediate access to a wide range of facilities and resources.

There are many options that might be tried to offer alternative settings to students for whom traditional school settings are unable to meet their special personal, academic or economic needs. For example, several multi-service learning centers might be established throughout the city. Such centers would be linked to one or two subdistricts and be designated as

alternative learning sites for students. Centers would offer a flexible range of programs and services to all types of students, including an educational program, personal and group counseling, and family support and referrals. Students of all types--those who are failing, gifted or only having limited difficulty in school--could be served at the center. Flexible scheduling approaches could make centers more accessible to pregnant and parenting students.

Each center would assist students design individual educational plans that best meet their particular needs. Such centers could also serve as an area resource for students who remain in regular schools but need special tutoring, counseling, etc. In addition, centers could offer work readiness training; arrange internships; provide child care to parenting students or for children of at-risk students; serve as a conduit for gifted students to enroll in college courses; work with parents and students to explore postsecondary educational opportunities and scholarship availability.

> Recommendation 8: Examine the wide range of regulations, assumptions and practices currently in place that affect how schools operate and education is delivered. Identify those that appear to push students unintentionally away from high academic performance and towards dropping out. Devise and implement modifications to reduce these barriers.

Within any large school district, there are countless regulations, exceptions and other administrative procedures which often inadvertently serve to push some students out directly, limit the opportunities for others and sometimes serve as mechanisms for administrators to expel unwanted students. We are not familiar with all district policies that might have unintentional effects. However, a number of broad areas emerge from the national literature that are strong candidates for review: hours of operation, child care, suspensions, family mobility, and yearlong credit.

- Hours of operation. Most schools operate on a fairly rigid daily schedule that is often incompatible with other pressures faced by students. In particular, school-age parents may need to work early in the day and attend school in the late afternoon and early evening hours. Schools need to have flexible hours to meet the needs of these students. Perhaps a house within each high school or a house within a cluster or district could operate on flexible hours.

- Child care. Many adolescent girls in the middle and high schools are parents and need child care to stay in school. Such services need to be provided on or

near the school site for such students. (Note that funds for such services could come from outside the District.) Nevertheless, child care should be available within a school, or a cluster or district so that young adolescent parents would not have restricted access to schools by virtue of being parents. Many districts have instituted such centers.

- Suspensions. Suspensions appear to be a mainstay of many public schools as a way of enforcing discipline and maintaining order. However, the research evidence is clear that out-of-school suspensions have little clout among disaffected students and their parents to encourage better performance and more importantly, cause students who are suspended to fall farther behind in school work. Further, out of school suspensions give youth a taste of non-school attendance. Districts across the nation are developing alternatives to out-of-school suspensions, including in-school suspensions, that achieve the same discipline purpose but without simultaneously fostering academic failure.

- Family Mobility. Philadelphia schools experience a substantial amount of student mobility each year. A considerable portion of this mobility results from family re-location within the school district and is quite a serious problem for homeless youth or youth whose family poverty forces them to move from one location to another. School reassignments resulting from these moves produce educational disruption in students' lives that leads to a retardation in a student's academic progress. The district should consider ways to keep a student in his or her "home" school until the end of the current semester and preferably the entire school year. Under ideal circumstances, students would be given the option of remaining in their home school until graduation. Such a change in policy would require additional support including special academic counseling, transportation assistance and conferences with parents about the need for constancy and consistency in a student's schooling.

- Half-year credits. Many argue that yearlong credits discourage those who have done poorly early in the school year or who have not attended from trying to complete a course successfully. They contend that breaking the year into smaller units would enable students to complete some portion of a course and continue to make forward progress.

Recommendation 9: Devise a strategy for fully engaging the community in the process of public education in a manner that is goal-directed and meets the needs of the students. This effort must be based on a series of contracts and agreements between the community and the school district, individual schools and units, teachers and students that define expectations for academic improvement and expectations of community support.

One of the most welcome trends in public education has been a resurgence in community support in the form of school/business partnerships, increased levels of volunteerism in schools and links with social service agencies. Many Philadelphia schools have benefited from this increased support.

There exist a number of organizations--Committee to Support Philadelphia Schools, Philadelphia Partnership for Education--as well as many individual corporations, universities and other agencies who have expressed a desire to assist public education. We suggest that they represent a community resource that has been tapped in only a limited manner. The framework for action detailed in this chapter will require additional support if it is to be implemented. However, beyond simply asserting that more support is needed, the framework also points to those areas in which community support can be most effectively challenged. In addition, it is a plan to improve the performance on the part of the district and its schools in educating their students.

As part of a program that seeks support from the community, the school district and the community must enter into a goal-directed set of contracts involving all levels of the school district and community. These contracts or agreements must define each group's expectations and responsibilities. Students must be encouraged to enter into agreements with teachers that describe their commitment to school work as a condition for effective teaching by faculty. The schools and units must enter into agreements with the business community and universities in which they promise to educate youth imbuing them with the skills to perform effectively in work or postsecondary education. For their part, businesses and universities must promise to provide employment and educational opportunities for graduates and students. The district must also reach out to other organizations within the community--trade unions, social change and advocacy organizations, churches and religious organizations, health care organizations and community-based organizations--and invite them to become involved with the schools. Bi-lateral agreements with these organizations should also be developed to formally link the school with the entire community. Such a series of contracts makes partners of the entire community in public education.

One of the most heralded examples of community support for education has been the Boston Compact. Begun in 1982, it was a bargain between the public schools and the community's businesses, unions and universities in which the latter pledged to achieve specific goals in employment opportunities and post-secondary acceptances if the schools pledged to demonstrate school improvement as measured by improved test scores, higher attendance and reduced dropout rates. We envision such a bargain can be achieved in Philadelphia--with one important difference.

There are important lessons to be learned from the Boston example. In general, schools entered into the agreement with <u>few</u> concrete plans for effective reform. Schools were assigned the task of devising school-based plans to improve student performance by five percent per year but were given only limited guidance and support in how best to do it. Within schools, there was initial and continuing resistance to a "top-down", mandated plan. Although all schools developed plans, few of these plans dictated substantial re-thinking or restructuring how schooling was done. In consequence, the school district's partners were much more "successful" in achieving their employment and enrollment targets; the schools, by contrast, needed to spend a considerable period gearing up for reform. At the end of five years, the school district had made some progress in improved attendance and higher test scores but had been unable to reduce its high dropout rate.

We believe that a Philadelphia agreement in which all parties <u>have a strategy for achieving goals</u> can be developed using the framework offered here. In particular, a large portion of this framework principally focuses on educational change <u>within</u> schools themselves.

CONCLUSION

None of these recommendations, by themselves, will automatically reduce the chances that students will leave Philadelphia public schools before graduating. Taken together, they represent changes that are likely to make a dramatic difference in the education of Philadelphia's children. Many of these recommendations will involve little additional expenditure of funds. Others will be more costly. But before they are discarded on the basis of cost alone, the system ought to examine other areas where costs can be reduced.

The plan is obviously ambitious in other ways since it calls for many changes simultaneously. Much that is recommended may require additional planning of considerable duration. But many problems in the system are acute and cannot await a long-term planning process.

Some may be implemented in a short time period. Perhaps, while awaiting the results of the deliberations about high school restructuring and as part of the systemwide transition from junior high schools to middle schools, one or two districts would consider instituting house plans with social support teams, reduced teacher loads and constant teacher assignment in the middle schools. This, coupled with STEP, a redirection of summer youth employment and training funds towards educational outcomes, may be what is needed to improve the 7th and 8th grade promotion rates and make youth better prepared for high school. At the same time, it could be an important first step towards systemwide implementation of these recommendations.

The theme of this report is that improving the quality of education and increasing the chances that students will graduate from high school are inextricably entwined and can be effectively accomplished by pursuing both simultaneously. Philadelphia Public Schools face a substantial challenge in addressing these goals and meeting many other student needs. Only by a reasoned, systemwide approach can substantial change and improvement occur. Important steps have already been taken. The recommendations in this report offer a guide for next phase of the journey.

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APPENDIX A:

Brief Descriptions of Other Programs Identified in Text

Adolescent Primary Health Care Clinic; Urban Affairs Corporation; 2815 Reid; Houston, TX 77026. Source: Orr (1987).

Begun in 1979, in response to concerns about the health of students living in a poor area of Houston, the Adolescent Primary Health Care Clinic has expanded into three related programs. The clinic offers health services to 10,000 students enrolled in eight junior and senior high schools. Located adjacent to one of the target schools, the clinic operates as a comprehensive health care clinic providing free health care (medical screenings, sports physicals, family planning, treatment of minor illnesses and prenatal, postpartum and pediatric care) to all economically-eligible students.

Orr reports that almost 1,100 students received clinic services in the 1984/85 school year. Of particular importance are medical screenings for youth who have not had comprehensive health care since birth or early childhood.

The second related program is Training and Employment for Adolescent Mothers (TEAM) which is a training program for 200 pregnant and parenting teenage girls. Participants must be pregnant or parenting, aged between 14 and 22 and AFDC-eligible. The program has four components: education (including remediation and pre-GED classes); preemployment training and counseling; job training; and, clinic's health care services. After completing preemployment classes, participants are placed in permanent employment positions developed and subsidized through the program.

The third part of the Houston program is the Fifth Ward Enrichment Program, a dropout prevention program targeted at 30 boys enrolled in an adjacent middle school who are at risk of dropping out. The program seeks to instill a sense of the importance of education in these students through daily remedial classes, counseling, and two-hour enrichment activities after school including field trips, life-skills classes and workshops sponsored by community leaders.

Participants can earn tokens through attending program activities, completing school work, and progress in school work. Accumulated tokens can be traded in for gifts and prizes. The key component of the program, however, is the close daily contact that program staff maintain with participants while they are in the program.

Murray-Wright High School Day-Care Center; Murray-Wright High School; 2001 West Warren Avenue; Detroit, Michigan 48202. Source: Orr (1987)

Established in 1974, the Murray-Wright High School Day-Care Center is an on-site center for infants and toddlers. The program serves children aged 6 week to 2 and one-half years old of teenage mothers who are enrolled in school. During the first year, mothers are required to participate in a year-long parenting class that focuses on both infant and maternal health care, child-rearing and problem solving.

Students are encouraged to complete their high school education by the teacher-coordinator and day-care center staff who emphasize that the center relieves some of the pressure and stress associated with teenage parenting.

The center care for approximately 20 infants of students who meet certain criteria including being AFDC-eligible and two or more years below grade level in reading and math. Only students with one infant are served by the program since experience suggested that students with two or more children were unable to cope with schedules and other demands of school. The program is funded by a mixture of local school district funds, Chapter 1 support and State of Michigan social service funds.

Program staff report that the center is inadequate for the needs of their school estimating that twice as many girls in Murray-Wright High School would place their children at the center if space were available. Staff estimate that between 50 and 75 percent of teenage mothers participating in the program graduate from high school.

Project Diversified Educational Experiences Program (DEEP): KEDDS/Link; Staff Development Center; 3030 South Osage; Wichita, KS 67217. Source: National Dissemination Study Group (1988).

DEEP is a alternative approach to organizing academic classroom. According to the National Dissemination's Study Group (1988), DEEP's objective is to develop a highly structured learning environment in secondary school classrooms that emphasizes success for every student while decreasing student hostility to schools.

DEEP offers a teacher training strategy that focuses on teachers becoming "learning facilitators." Teachers involve students more directly in classroom organization and management by setting objectives, developing tasks, organizing presentations and participating in evaluations.

Public Schools of Choice: High School in the Community (HSC): 45 Nash Street; New Haven, CT 06511. Source: National Dissemination Study Group (1988).

Public Schools of Choice is an alternative public secondary school designed to offer students choice in learning environments within the public school system. Students are given considerable latitude in selecting their program of study and schedule but meet with counselors and in group sessions each day. The school is governed by the Policy Council which includes students, teachers and parents and permits students to participate in broad educational decision making.

Public Schools of Choice does not award letter grades but each student receives descriptive evaluations of their work. The program reports substantial gains in reading skills and improvement in attitudes about school.

Student Opportunity, Advancement and Retention (SOAR): New York City Public Schools. Source: Orr (1987)

Part of a citywide dropout prevention initiative, SOAR targets overage ninth graders in 16 high schools with poor attendance records. The state-supported program, is placed high schools where 43 percent of students were absent more than 60 days in the prior school year. Among its key features is block-rostering of small groups of students which includes a daily tutorial period, and individual instruction for students who return to school midyear.

Depending on the school, SOAR participants are offered augmented counseling, academic remediation and a variety of incentives to reward good performance. Orr (1988: 159) notes that "Through the close tracking of each student's attendance, the small size and family-like program, academic support, and skills classes, students are encouraged to attend school more frequently and experience more success while there.